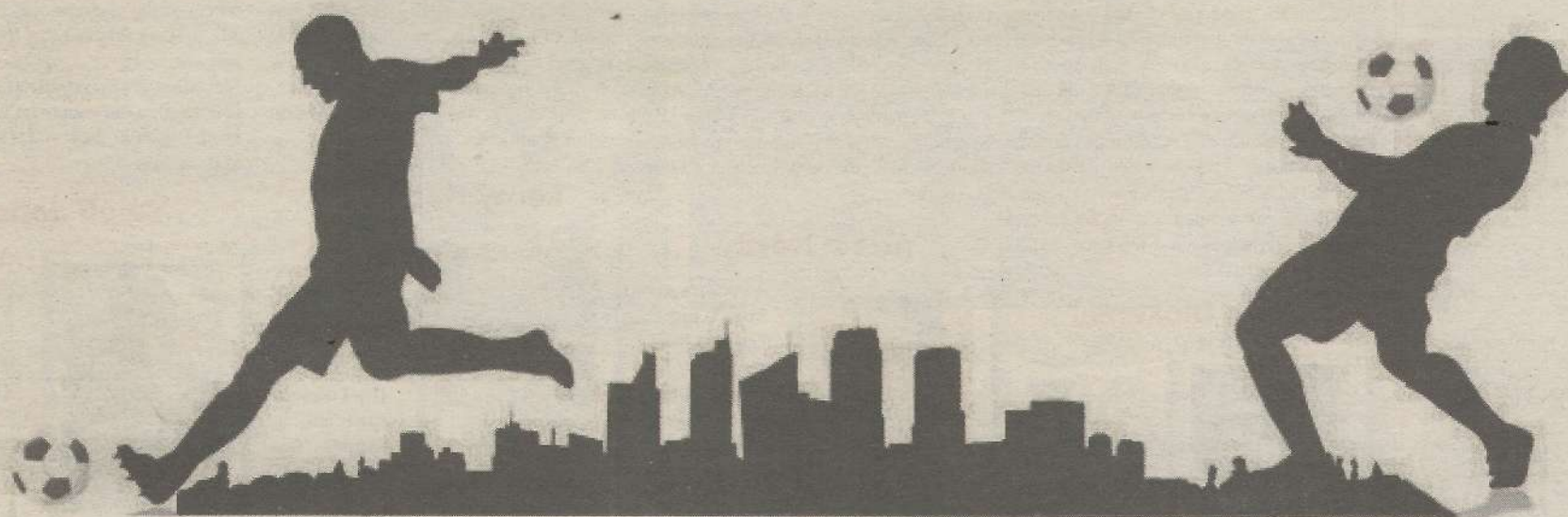


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Weekly

Vol. 6 No. 1 Monday 22nd February 2010 Still \$4



2010

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Weekly

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Goal! Weekly endeavours to be as accurate as possible with everything it publishes.

The Fair Trading Act 1999 requires Goal! Weekly to disclaim any belief in the truth or falsity of information which is supplied to it and which is published in other than editorial content.

Ashley Morrison



Ashley Morrison is a former goalkeeper, who as a child was not allowed to play in goal as he became too annoyed when he conceded a goal. However the lure of standing between the posts and repelling attacks was too great and he soon went back between the sticks. A former minor counties cricketer in England having played for the county of his birth, Wiltshire, Ashley has been a Swindon Town fan since going to his first game aged seven. He moved to Australia in 1987 and played football for Subiaco and the Western Knights. He worked in the print media for eleven years before illness saw a career change. He has worked on radio in Perth since 1992, and presents a weekly radio show called "Not The Footy Show" which focuses on all sports but not AFL. You will also see him pop up on your screens on the Fox Sports coverage of the Hyundai A League. Ashley has also published two books, "Headingley Remembered - A Century of Ashes Cricket" and "Please Sir Can I have my Ball Back."

tween the posts and repelling attacks was too great and he soon went back between the sticks. A former minor counties cricketer in England having played for the county of his birth, Wiltshire, Ashley has been a Swindon Town fan since going to his first game aged seven. He moved to Australia in 1987 and played football for Subiaco and the Western Knights. He worked in the print media for eleven years before illness saw a career change. He has worked on radio in Perth since 1992, and presents a weekly radio show called "Not The Footy Show" which focuses on all sports but not AFL. You will also see him pop up on your screens on the Fox Sports coverage of the Hyundai A League. Ashley has also published two books, "Headingley Remembered - A Century of Ashes Cricket" and "Please Sir Can I have my Ball Back."

Lee Gagliardi



A soccer tragic who reached the pinnacle of his career playing for the U/12 SA State Team. A major highlight of my life was being at all

of Australia's games in Germany for the 2006 World Cup. I was reduced to tears after every match, but especially when the Socceroos lost to Italy. It was the first WC where Italy were not my first choice team, but I was glad to see them win in the end after enduring 4 previous unsuccessful tournaments. I happened to be in Rome the night of the final and the celebrations are something that were out of this world and something I doubt I'll see again... except when Australia win it!!! I lived in Spain for two years and loved that football was on TV every night!!! The women and the tapas were also amazing!!!!

John Dickens



I'm a massive sports fan who likes to think he knows a little something about pretty much every sport shown in England. Of course I'm obsessed

with football, to the point where even though I'm a lifelong Arsenal fan I actually have a season ticket at Fulham just to watch top football whenever I can. I also have qualifications in English Literature and Media, and a degree in Film, and if I'm not watching or talking sports then I'm probably watching a movie. Or I'm down the pub playing darts, the only sport that I'm halfway decent at.

Anita Milas



Anita has been involved in photography since she was 16 and would love to say that that was only 20 years ago but it's slightly more. Dis-

covered shooting football and dropped everything else after that. Owns a website called www.refsworld.com.au which supports and supplies referees of all levels around the world and is gaining momentum every day. Proudly the largest online referee store in the Southern Hemisphere. All the photos we shoot for Refsworld are available to GW. Also a gun at photoshop and run Victorypix Sports Photography where we shoot football clubs and do player and referee collages.

Adam North



I'm a massive sports fan who likes to think he knows a little something about pretty much every sport shown in England. Of course I'm obsessed

with football, to the point where even though I'm a lifelong Arsenal fan I actually have a season ticket at Fulham just to watch top football whenever I can. I also have qualifications in English Literature and Media, and a degree in Film, and if I'm not watching or talking sports then I'm probably watching a movie. Or I'm down the pub playing darts, the only sport that I'm halfway decent at.

Con Stamocostas



Con is a former high school class mate of Tim Cahill (he was three years below me but close enough) Not enough is known about him after his high school years (rumors abound that he was a ship's cook or even imported rare birds) A rare sighting was made in the early noughties where he spotted on a strange Italian man's moped while on the way to see Roma vs Galatasaray in a Champions League game in Rome. Other recent sightings have seen him interview Australian boss Pim Verbeek and most of the current Socceroos. One time he even, managed to coax a laugh out of FFA CEO Ben Buckley. Con is the editor of Half Time Heroes, an online football fanzine.

Jarrod Ellis



A football tragic, child of Mexico '86 and former Capalaba and Redlands junior who has long since given the game away in favour

of less physically strenuous pursuits. Graduated from Griffith University with majors in Marketing and Sports Management but was unable to resist taking on largely unrelated duties when Goal! Weekly presented itself. Has since taken great strides in his knowledge of QLD football after having been brought up in an ex-pat household where 'You'll Never Walk Alone' was considered a pseudo national anthem.

Leroy Robinson



Former sportsman of the year at Mayfield Primary School (A G E D 10) I developed into a football fan during the advent of satellite TV in

the 80s, spending the following decades gaining a degree in armchair watching and developing an intimate knowledge of the European game.

In between I've studied marketing, had an online video games company and held down various office jobs, finding my calling a few years ago when writing novels. Ghost wrote a novel last year, now I need a publishing deal and agent for my own work.

I live in south London not far from Millwall FC. My love aside from football and writing is travelling and watching live sporting events, like England's regular creaming of the Aussies at cricket!

Luke Sheehan



I graduated from Journalism at RMIT last year, after coming fresh out of high school at St. Bernard's College, Essendon. I'm

a self-professed student of football given my Aussie Rules background, but have learnt all about it from watching the best, that is Newcastle United and Melbourne Victory over the last few years. I idolise the now retired (surely) Mark Viduka, as he's Keilor-bred like myself. Currently working as a sports journalist at local rag Star Newspaper, while also contributing to Goal all things VPL. Playing indoor soccer at Tullamarine, but looking to play at an outdoor club sometime soon, as soon as I can find a club desperate enough to take me on board.

Brett McDonald



Brett is a Sport's snapper in Brisbane and loves his job. Brett has always been involved in sport until one day he was climbing a ladder

on to his roof to finish off some work, slipped, fell and ended up with 12 pins and a 30cm plate in his leg. So, off to hospital he goes for a 9 day stay and 4 hour operation. The most disappointing aspect of the accident was Brett was really looking forward to a few cold beers that afternoon.

Since that fateful day, Brett has been unable to play the games he loves so now he photographs them and is still involved in the action.

Geoff Jones



Geoff Jones is an award winning freelance photographer covering sporting events for commercial and editorial clients. Some of his recent work

includes FFA international events and the Hyundai A League and W league series. Recently he won 4 awards at the 2009 International Aperture Awards for his sports photography. He is regularly commissioned by sporting bodies and photo agencies to cover local and international events, such as the Australian Rugby Union, Australian international cricket series as well as the Australian Open tennis and golf. His images have been published worldwide and his portfolio can be viewed at ishootsport.com.au. Geoff has been contributing images to Goal Weekly for the past two years and his work is known for capturing the mood and moment.

John Clarke



After being raised solely on the oval ball, he discovered his love for the world game as a 13 year old after stumbling upon it late one Satur-

day night/Sunday morning after one too many Woodstocks. An avid follower of the Premier League he is often found at a local TAB investing large amounts of his hard earned on his numerous hunches. As a footballer he makes a good journalist, but was proud to see his indoor side 'Slipadidge' sneak through to the finals in their first full season. He dreams of one day travelling to Europe and seeing Leeds United rise from the dreary depths of League One and back to the pinnacle of English Football.



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Costa Koutropoulos



Misunderstood former Frankston Pines and Richmond Eagles midfielder, who studied Marketing at Southern California College whilst on a soccer scholarship.

Trained for six months with the San Diego Sockers of the MISL, before deciding to return home because it was before emails, he missed his girlfriend and, in hindsight, was an idiot.

Popped out to grab a loaf of bread one day and somehow ended up spending the next eight years in London working at Saatchi and Saatchi, and The Moving Picture Company, all the while enjoying the delights of European football from a series of tavernas across the Mediterranean.

Loved watching the European finals on SBS at 4am, but could never get home from Chasers in time. Got his first taste of football journalism when given a job by Les Shorrock at Soccer Star, who basically taught him everything he knows. Was privileged to play with Paul Trimboli at Brighton Juniors, and Con Boutsianis at Caulfield City (NYL). Both experiences felt like witnessing something out of the movie, 'The Natural'. What a turn. What a left foot. Hurry up, and pass the popcorn....

Roy Hay



My grandfather captained Celtic, Newcastle United and Scotland, my father won a Scottish Cup medal in schoolboy competition, but talent

skipped my generation. So I just played, coached, managed, refereed and wrote about the game. I taught at the University of East Anglia, Glasgow and the Open University in the United Kingdom and Deakin University for 35 years. Sports and Editorial Services Australia (www.sesasport.com.au) has been involved with 15 books in the last five years, some on football, others on a wide range of subjects. Now my main interest is the history of the game and helping young people get a start in education and journalism.

Barcode



I just joined the team this year. You won't get much out of me, except I normally hang around the back of the mag. Maybe

I should have been a defender or something - if anyone can afford me....

Walter Pless



Soccer writer for The Mercury in Tasmania for 25 years. Has also written for "World Soccer" in London, "Australian Soccer Weekly" in

Sydney, "Soccer Action" in Melbourne, "Australian FourFourTwo" and "Soccer International".

GW GOES NATIONAL!

Greetings football fans from wherever you are around Australia, and a very warm welcome to the first edition of Goal! Weekly for 2010.

GW is without doubt Australia's fastest growing football fanzine and due to popular demand it will now be available nationally and in living colour. Woo hoo!

Thanks to the champs at Fairfax Media, GW will be delivered and available for your enjoyment at a newsstand near you every Monday. Although please note, in some areas you'll have to wait until Tuesdays to grab your copy. Sorry!

Anyway, just so you know a little bit about us; GW first rolled off the press in February 2005, and since its inception has built a loyal following of over 4000 readers per week.

Over 150 editions have now been produced and the publication is well and truly a respected and ac-

cepted medium within Australia's grass-roots football community - well, up until now, especially Victoria anyway.

GW is produced by a team of dedicated writers, photographers, designers and a bunch of football tragics who are totally committed to delivering an alternative football voice in print media.

The publication provides fans with a complete round-up of the weekend's action and results from all of Australia's respective Premier League competitions - including news, match reviews, coaches' comments, action photographs, in-depth analysis, expert commentary, and whatever else we can think of during any given week.

You'll have to forgive us for being a tad Victorian orientated in this first edition, but please bear with us as we embark on this exciting odyssey and get the hang of this whole national availability

business thing.

Over the coming weeks we'll be doing our very best to bring you the best from your state, too!

But in the meantime, kick back and relax, and say hello to the bulk of our crew.

We hope you enjoy this maiden voyage and hope you stay for the ride over the next 30 weeks or so.

We look forward to your company in 2010 as we anticipate covering another exciting season of Australian football.

If you fancy getting involved, feel free to drop us a line at news@goalweekly.com or even check out our website at www.goalweekly.com.

Until next time, remember to keep it real, get some balls, and get some Goal! Weekly in your life!

Yours in football,

Ed.

Craig MacKenzie



Craig MacKenzie is a former assistant editor and editor of Fairfax publication, Soccer Action, a national weekly tabloid that ran from 1977 to

1987. From 1987 to 1995 he was assistant editor then chief subeditor of Inside Football, an Australian Rules publication, before becoming chief subeditor of Syme Magazines. From 1997 to 2003 he worked as a book editor with travel book publisher Lonely Planet. Since 2004 he has worked as a sole trader editing text books primarily for Oxford University Press and Thomson Learning (now Cengage Learning). He was lured out of football writing retirement and joined the GW team in 2007. He drinks Guinness, smokes Henry Wintemans' long panatelas, is a republican, a Scottish Nationalist, a non-sectarian Rangers supporter and recently successfully applied for a licence restoration order ... feel free to build your own stereotype.

Eddie Krncevic



Australian soccer legend, Eddie Krncevic represented the Socceroos 35 times and scored 17 goals. He played pro-

fessionally in Europe for Dinamo Zagreb (Croatia), MSV Duisberg (Germany), Mulhouse (France) and Anderlecht, FC Liege, Aalst and Charleroi in Belgium.

Mark Boric



Before 20 years of marking pitches, putting up nets, washing kits, running line, serving in canteens, serving behind the bar, refereeing, erecting

goalposts, making drinks, producing newsletters, filling in team sheets, trying to maintain a website, cleaning up change rooms and occasionally dealing with the VSF/FFV, Mark Boric had hair and smiled more.

Paul Bosnjak



My name is Paul Bosnjak. I'm currently in Year 11 at Saint Ignatius College. I hope one day to become a journalist. My dream would be to cover a world cup, or to break into

the scene in Europe somewhere. I follow soccer religiously. I play, I watch, and enjoy it a lot. My favourite teams are Arsenal, Celtic and in the local game you can't go past Melbourne Victory. I'm having a great time bringing the games to Goal Weekly and am looking forward to covering the rest of the Go For Your Life Cup.

Peter Katholos



Australian international with 25 caps, Australian Player of the Year, winner of 4 NSL championships, 3 NSL Cups, 557 first grade games, 97 goals from

1976-1996. Played for St George, Sydney Olympic, Apia, Marconi, Melita Eagles and Larissa (Greece). Rated as one of the best technically gifted players ever produced in Australia. Now involved with player development and player management. www.technikfootball.com

Daniel Flis



Born in Poland, lived in Italy for a period of two years before migrating to Australia in 1989.

In 2004 Daniel formed DVF Images which was

created out of passion for photography and years of experience.

DVF Images specializes in Weddings, Portraits, Sports and Commercial photography. My passion for sports has led me to cover International level games, A-League, Premier League all the way to grass roots.

DVF Images sports coverage has slowly but surely made into commercial publications all around Australia, which has included photos to Goal Weekly (Victoria's only dedicated Soccer Newspaper), The Star Newspaper, Four Four Two, Soccer International magazines and FFV. DVF Images not only has provided coverage for Football Clubs but also has developed Goal Weekly website and looks after it.

Mike Salter



A gentleman with no football talent whatsoever, Mike Salter became hooked on the game in his early twenties, and has been showing

his opinions on it down other people's throats ever since. He has written on the local and international game for tribalfutbol.com, sydneyfcunofficial.com, realfootball.com.au and, in a brief foray into the world of professional journalism, FIFA.com. His life's ambition was to write for something without ".com" in it, and this is where Goal! Weekly came in. In his spare time, he is a language teacher and jazz musician.

Julius Ross



Julius Ross' eyes were opened to the beauty of the World Game when he travelled to the 1998 World Cup in France aged 11. Joining the throngs of

French fans through the streets of Paris after the nation's triumph, chanting allez les Blues, the memory, and the pungent smell of French tobacco, will remain with him forever. Since '98, football has been his bread and butter (or croissant and pinot noir). Playing achievements include winning an historic treble with Tasmania's oldest football club, South Hobart, and scoring against Sydney FC's youth league side for a select Tasmanian under-21 team in 2008. Julius writes the soccer column for Hobart's Mercury newspaper and is currently studying a Master of Journalism.

Carlos Ibarra



A passion for football and magazines formed the perfect marriage for someone who fell into sports media following a Media degree and an

internship at The Age, Herald Sun, SBS Television, ABC Radio, Sportal and the Leader Newspapers.

Joined the Football Federation Victoria and set up the foundations for its media unit during the organisation's transformation period giving him a taste of local football from the ground up. Experience as the media manager at numerous sporting events such as the Commonwealth Games, International soccer friendlies and most recently the Men's and Women's International Hockey Champions Trophy Tournaments, have added to an all round knowledge of sport.

A love of page layout and design took Carlos to News Corp where he worked as a sub-editor on many of its major publications and is currently the Media and Communications Manager for Hockey Victoria.

Andrew Fisher



If my name is Andrew, former goalkeeper for Brimbank Stallions & Western Eagles. Loyal Melbourne Knights supporter 'having grown

up during the glory days of Viduka and co. Football is in my blood, living and breathing it everyday. Writing match reports is a passion, and I always strive to deliver an unbiased report despite the fact I cover my own team.

I have rarely missed a Knights match in the last ten years, but will have to do without my football fix for eight weeks when I get married in April this year, and yes of course I met my future wife at a football match.

Durakovic takes on Souths

By Craig MacKenzie

MEHMET Durakovic will come face to face with the club at which he achieved legend status when he coaches the National Training Centre (NTC) first team squad against South Melbourne at Bob Jane Stadium tomorrow night (Tuesday) at 7.45pm.

The former Socceroo also will square off against former Souths teammate and New Zealand international Vaughan Coveny, who has taken over the coaching reins of the Greek-backed outfit.

Durakovic only recently was appointed to lead the NTC program's first team and as we went to press his Melbourne Victory youth team assistant, Steve Mautone, was negotiating with Football Federation Victoria to become Durakovic's NTC assistant.

FFV's decision to include two NTC squads in Premier League ranks (seniors and under-21s) has the support of both Football Federation Australia and Melbourne Victory which will supply the bulk of Durakovic's squad from its pool of youth players.

FFA, FFV and Victory will combine to fund the venture which also has the backing of new A-League franchise Melbourne Heart, according to FFV CEO Mark Rendell.

"We've spoken to both Scott (Munn, Heart CEO) and John (Didiluca, Heart football operations manager) about this venture and

they are philosophically supportive of what we are trying to do," said Rendell.

"I'm hopeful that this program will eventually benefit both clubs (Victory and Heart)."

Heart will not field a youth team in its inaugural A-League season so it will not make a financial commitment to the NTC Premier League venture at this stage.

NTC first team games will not be for points albeit that red and yellow cards and suspensions will apply.

However, NTC reserves (under-21) games will be for points and Ian Greener will coach the squad, maintaining his established links with players involved in that program. As we went to press Greener was yet to appoint an assistant.

"That's the Joeys' group that I'll be looking after and I'd like to stay close to that group," said Greener.

FFV announced last November that it would take over the management of the VIS program headed by Greener and used to identify boys for the under-17 and under-20 national teams and for scholarships at the Australian Institute of Sport. Greener remains in charge of the boys' program.

Durakovic was upbeat about the VPL venture when we spoke to him last week.

"It's a fantastic concept and it means that these boys will be involved on a 12 months basis thanks to the national youth league and the NTC program," he said.

"For me it's all about developing

the kids and it gives these young players a great chance to play against men in the VPL.

"If these kids were to go back to their Premier League clubs they might not get the same opportunity that we can provide. I mean once a (VPL) club has two or three losses they're not going to play a 16- or 17-year-old kid in their first team."

Rendell was hopeful that despite not playing for points the clubs would field strong line-ups and provide stiff competition for the NTC youngsters.

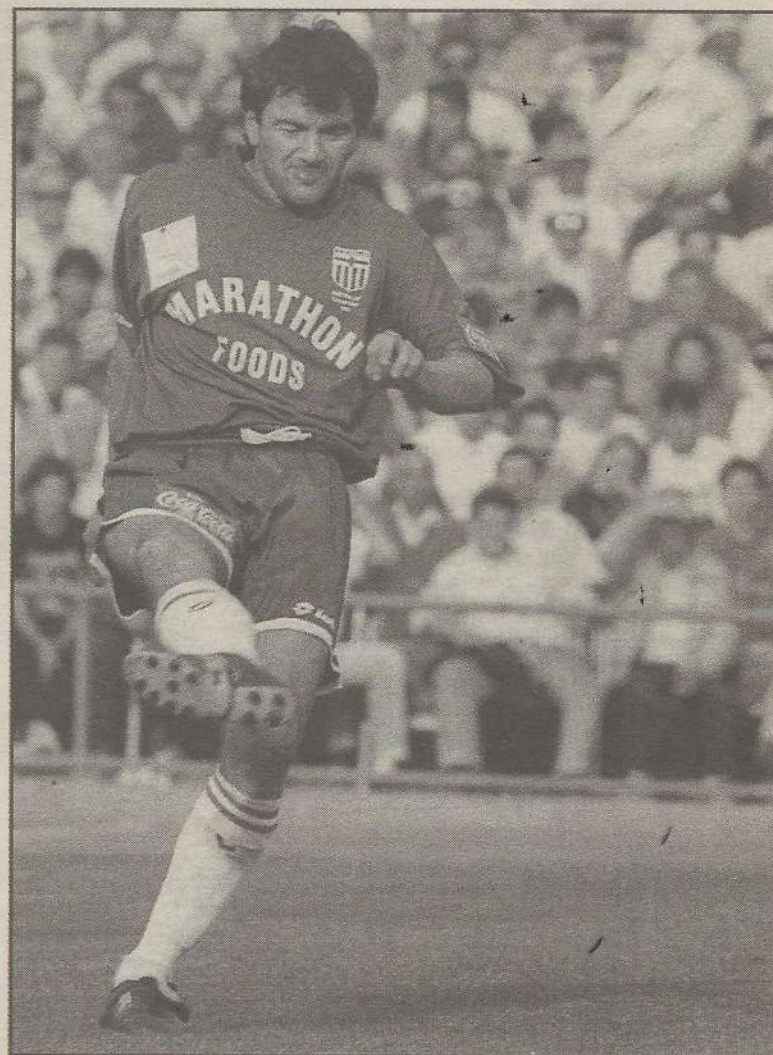
"We're giving clubs the chance to stage some games at their home grounds and we hope that they take this concept seriously," he said.

"We raised the issue of clubs not playing for points and the ramifications of this at the VPL information night and we'll monitor the situation in this first season (of NTC inclusion).

"It's a new program and it aims to provide the missing link in a winter competition for these young boys, especially the ones who are talented but are not getting the opportunity of senior football at their clubs."

It remains to be seen how much the clubs will embrace this concept and GW can reveal that South Melbourne will not field its first choice senior team tomorrow evening.

"There's no way that I'm going to risk my best team five days out from our first league game (on Sunday against Altona Magic),"



Mehmet Durakovic in South colours back in his playing days.

said Coveny.

"At the end of the day we're playing for points on Sunday, not Tuesday."

"I've got a fairly big squad and I'll be giving players a chance to

push for a place in the starting line-up. If I'm a couple of players short I'll draw on players from our under-21s and if they are short they'll bring up players from the under-18s."

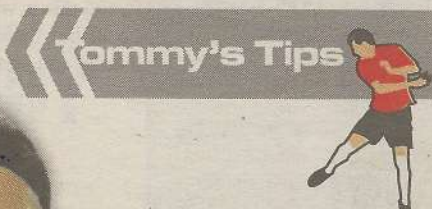
With Lionel Messi Barcelona is the clear favourite to beat Stuttgart at home but the Catalans do offer some value



BEST MULTI

Olympiakos v Bordeaux - under 2.5 match goals @ 1.55
Stuttgart v Barcelona - Barcelona to win @ 1.67
CSKA Moscow v Sevilla - Sevilla to qualify for the quarter finals @ 1.43
Inter Milan v Chelsea - Chelsea to qualify for the quarter finals @ 1.55

Dividend: 5.75



UEFA Champions League

Olympiakos v Bordeaux
Georgios Karaiskakis Stadium, Piraeus (GRE) -
Wednesday, 24 February 6:45AM AEDT

Olympiakos: 2.92 (Betfair)
Draw: 3.20 (Sportingbet)
Bordeaux: 2.68 (Betfair)

Match goals:
Over 2.5 goals: 2.30 (Sportingbet)
Under 2.5 goals: 1.55 (Sportingbet)

To qualify for quarter finals:
Olympiakos: 3.40 (Betfair)
Bordeaux: 1.40 (Sportsbet)

Olympiakos will be making only its third appearance in the UEFA Champions League knockout rounds. To reach the last eight Olympiakos must get the better of a Bordeaux outfit who posted the best group-stage record. Both sides will match up well in what should be a low scoring affair. Consider the 1.55 (Sportingbet) for under 2.5 goals in the match.

CSKA Moscow v Sevilla
Luzhniki Stadium, Moscow (RUS) -
Thursday, 25 February 6:45AM AEDT

CSKA Moscow: 2.94 (Betfair)
Draw: 3.35 (Betfair)
Sevilla: 2.62 (Betfair)

Match goals:
Over 2.5 goals: 2.10 (Sportingbet)
Under 2.5 goals: 1.65 (Sportingbet)

To qualify for quarter finals:
CSKA Moscow: 3.05 (TAB Sportsbet)
Sevilla: 1.43 (Sportsbet)

Sevilla won Group G by a four-point margin, losing only at FC Unirea Urziceni on Matchday 5 with qualification already assured. They triumphed at Rangers FC (4-1) and VfB Stuttgart (3-1) and have lost only three of their 14 matches in the UEFA Champions League proper so far. Take Sevilla to qualify for the quarter finals - 1.43 (Sportsbet) - in a multi.

Stuttgart v Barcelona
VfB Arena, Stuttgart (GER) -
Wednesday, 24 February 6:45AM AEDT

Stuttgart: 5.40 (Betfair)
Draw: 4.00 (Betfair)
Barcelona: 1.67 (Centrebet)

Match goals:
Over 2.5 goals: 1.80 (Sportsbet)
Under 2.5 goals: 1.91 (Sportsbet)

To qualify for quarter finals:
Stuttgart: 9.40 (Betfair)
Barcelona: 1.10 (Sportsbet)

Stuttgart enters this contest as underdogs when facing unbeaten Group-F winners Barcelona. The European champions are unbeaten in nine away matches in the UEFA Champions League and recorded home and away wins against Stuttgart when the clubs met in the UEFA Champions League group stage in 2007/08. Barcelona to win - 1.67 (Centrebet) - in a multi.

Inter Milan v Chelsea
Stadio Giuseppe Meazza, Milan (ITA) -
Thursday, 25 February 6:45AM AEDT

Inter Milan: 2.74 (Betfair)
Draw: 3.25 (Betfair)
Chelsea: 2.96 (Betfair)

Match Goals
Over 2.5 goals: 2.40
Under 2.5 goals: 1.50

To qualify for quarter finals:
Inter Milan: 2.74 (Betfair)
Chelsea: 1.55 (Sportsbet)

Former Chelsea manager José Mourinho was in charge when beaten in two UEFA Champions League semi-finals while at Chelsea. This week Mourinho aims to end the chances of his former club. Inter Milan have lost in the first knockout round of the Champions League in the last three seasons, being eliminated by English opposition for the last two years. Mourinho's Inter Milan won only two games in Group F and will struggle against Chelsea's quick mid-field. Take Chelsea to qualify for the quarter finals - 1.55 (Sportsbet) - in a multi.

Goal! Weekly will now bring you a wrap of the
Now that we have done your leg work you can

best odds being offered by all the major bookies!
sit back and enjoy the action

Monday 22 February 2010



Altona Magic SC

Formed: 1975

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VPL Championships

5 (2009, 2008, 1997, 1996, 1995)

President: Bill Nikolovski / Peter Duvceviski

Coach: Dragan Blazeovski

AssT: Pece Stojevski

Captain: Pece Siveski

Finished last season:

Champions

Top Scorer in 09:

Carl Recchia 5 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Carl Recchia 19 Votes (7th)

Squad List:

Sime Kovacevic
Pece Siveski (c)
Pece Cergovski
Mifit Bojku
Slave Bozinovski
Tony Saric
James Duvceviski
Alex Koltovski
Steve Masalkovski
Tomy Tomic
Ali Sanad
Danny Radojicic
Jurica Siljanovski
Justin Nikolovski
Doug Mladenovic
Kliment Tasevski
Koce Delev
Kole Delev
Jose Vasquez
Andrew Svetkopolous



Pece Siveski (middle right, smiling) celebrates with fellow Magic team-mates during last year's VPL Grand Final.

CHAMPS PLAY IT LOW KEY

New coach, board and committee take the helm

By Luke Sheehan

MOST sides that have won back-to-back premierships in any sport are red-hot favourites to do it again the following year, but Altona Magic's new-look line-up for the 2010 Victorian Premier League (VPL) season has no such expectations.

Magic captain Pece Siveski said new players into the side makes the upcoming season a new journey for Altona, and the premiership is not yet on his mind.

"No talk (about the last two years), there's pretty much no pressure on us to win the title this year," he said.

"In saying that, if the opportunity arises, we want to try and make the finals and win it again.

"The main thing at this stage is to pretty much secure (safety from) relegation as soon as possible, and then we can move forward from there. I think that's with any club, you get relegation sewn up as early as possible, because other-

wise you're going to be under pressure early in the season."

Siveski said the Magic has played "six to eight" pre-season games to prepare for the VPL season starting in four days, giving the premiers the chance to blood their new recruits.

"Sime Kovacevic from Whittlesea, we've signed the Delev twins, Kole and Koce, Danny Rabojcic, goalkeeper Tommy Tomich from South Melbourne, plus a few others."

According to Siveski, it is not just on-field where the Magic have swung the changes.

"Big news was that the coach left, and obviously we've got a new coach (Dragan Blazeovski), new committee, new board, and basically a new team."

The premiership captain said the recent Macedonian Cup held at Paisley Park last weekend was a good pre-season run for his side, but was more about the event bringing Melbourne's Macedonian community to one place.

"It was probably not so much about the hit out, it was more to bind the Macedonian community together, and hopefully this is an ongoing thing that happens every season. It was probably a good fundraiser for the club because the turn out was pretty good."

Magic, however, held nothing back in winning both the seniors and reserves Cups.

"We took it seriously, we did win the cup, but we didn't experiment too much in the final, put our strongest line up, and we won it."

The Magic have kept several of its premiership stars including 2009 grand final man-of-the-match Kliment Taseski, Tony Saric, Pece Cergovski, Slave Bozinovski and Doug Mladenovic.

The side had its final pre-season match on Saturday against NSW Super League side Rockdale at BT Connor Reserve.

The VPL kicks off for Altona this Sunday at 3pm, taking on South Melbourne at Paisley Park Soccer Complex.

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Green Gully SC

Formed: 1955

Ground Address:

Green Gully Reserve
Green Gully
Mel: 14 E8

VPL Championships:

7 (2005, 2003, 2000, 1999, 1983, 1982, 1981)

President: Charles Farrugia

Coach: Peter Ollerton

Captain: Dean Fak

Finished last season: 3rd

Top Scorer in 09

Joel Nikolic 12 goals

Most Gold Medal votes:

Jeff Fleming 20 votes (5th)

Squad List:

Michael Anderson
Steve Burton
Cameron Drake
Dean Fak
Daniel Jones (clearance pending)
Jeffrey Fleming
Kyrakos Gerohristodoulou
Joshua Groenewald
Graham Hockless
Mile Medjedovic
Joel Nikolic (out for season - knee reconstruction)
Ryan Ollerton
Nikola Roganovic
Matthew Sanders
(2009 Gully Players Player of the Year)
Andy Vargas
(2009 Gully Player of the Year)



1974 World Cup Socceroo, Peter Ollerton (right), with assistant coach Paul Harris.



The Cavaliers will be one of the teams to beat once again in 2010.

NEW LOOK GULLY EAGER FOR SUCCESS

By Markian Jaworsky

The Green Gully 2009 Roller Coaster season peaked with a late winning run of league matches, that saw the club move from just outside the final five into the double chance position of third place in the standings.

Unfortunately, by the time the finals came, the Cavaliers had run out of steam. After a thriller three all draw away to the second placed Altona Magic in the Qualifying Final, Green Gully were eventually undone in the a penalty shoot-out. The following week, the Cavaliers were bundled out of the finals at home to Hume City. The two results, continued a four year streak of qualifying for the finals, without winning any finals matches.

Coach Peter Ollerton who took over the team midway through 2009, vowed to end Gully's finals hoodoo with fresh new faces in a squad destined for success. From Heidelberg comes midfield maestro Graham Hockless, and potentially Daniel Jones, pending an updated visa clearance. From Altona Magic promising young goalkeeper Nikola Roganovic, aswell goalkeeper Kyrakos Gerohristodoulou from Whittlesea. Midfielder Joshua Groenewald joins from the Melbourne Knights,



Andy Vargas will be leading the charge for the Cavaliers.



2008 Gold Medalist, Graham Hockless, makes the move from Heidelberg United to Green Gully.

and Michael Anderson is promoted from the Under 21 squad.

The Cavaliers have parted company with Kristijan Ivesic, Kole Delev, Pablo Cardozo and Steven Tilovski. In unfortunate news, Gully striker Joel Nikolic will miss most of the 2010 season, as he is due shortly in the operating theatre for a knee reconstruction. Joel's injury leaves a gap up forward for Green Gully, and the club will no doubt be frantically involved in transfer activity up until the fi-

nal minutes of the transfer window, which closes on the 22nd of February.

The Cavaliers have had a modest pre-season campaign, losing and drawing with the Melbourne Knights over matches played home and away, as well as winning at home against the Sunshine Georgies and drawing away to VPL newcomers Northcote City.

**Melbourne Knights SC****Formed:** 1953**Ground Address:**Knights Stadium
Somers Street, Sunshine
Mel: 27 A6**VPL Championships:**

3 (1979, 1978, 1968)

President: Ange Cimera**Coach:** Ivan Duzel**Captain:** Ivica Praiz**Finished last season:** 9th**Top Scorer in 09:**

Greg Draper 7 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Craig Elvin 28 votes (5th)

Squad List:Goalkeepers
Ante Loncaric
Mate Vrbec**Defenders**Daniel Rocco
Bryan Bran
Ben Surey
Ryan Filipovic
Tomislav Skara
Scott Lucas**Midfield**Josip Magdic
Ivica Praiz
Anthony Colosimo
Liam Cannell
Adrian Zahra
Arnaud Berthaut
Tiago Rodrigues**Strikers**Jacob Colosimo
Tomislav Ples
Kevin Townson
Jean Charles Dubois

Under the watchful eye of new coach, Ivan Duzel, the Knights are thirsty to bring back the glory days to Knights Stadium.

NEW ERA AT SOMERS STREET

By Andrew Fisher

A new coach, a new squad and a new logo, the Melbourne Knights are barely recognisable from the team that made the grand final just two seasons ago.

Changes were definitely required after last season's disappointing performance. Firstly a new committee was elected, which followed by the decision to revert to the old logo in which Knight's famously won their NSL titles with, and finally Ivan Duzel was chosen to replace Chris Taylor as head coach.

On the field is where the Knights have been the most active. Key departures during the off season has included former Captain Craig Elvin switching to Heidelberg, Joshua Groenewald heading down the road to Green Gully, Matthew Grbesa now playing his trade in India and Cameron Watson, John Fitzgerald & Jamie Cumming all moving to Oakleigh.

Many are predicting a tough season for the Knight's with the loss of these key players, however the club has also managed to recruit some talented youngsters. Coming into the team are; Bryon Bran (Romania), Ben Surey (Crystal Palace), Josip Magdic (Perth Glory), Ivica Praiz (Duisberg), Tomislav Ples (Toronto Croatia),

and Jean Charles Dubois (France). Also returning to the club are goalkeeper Ante Loncaric, Daniel Rocco and Adrian Zahra.

Fans are relishing the opportunity of seeing Praiz and Ples in action during the season after excelling during training and recent friendly matches. Praiz is set to use his experience gained in Germany to marshal the Knights' midfield, and there are high hopes for 23yo Canadian-born Tomislav Ples who netted 13 goals last season for Toronto Croatia.

After a tough pre-season the Knights' seem to be gelling well together, with positive results against Sydney United (2-3), St Albans (5-0) and Preston Lions (5-1), raising hopes of a successful campaign this season.

However the Knights will have to start the season on the back foot, with the FFV deciding to punish the club for not footing a \$1100 bill at the Gold Medal presentation night, by docking them three points.

Adding to their troubles they begin their season with a tough road trip to Dandenong Thunder, before playing their first home game the following week against Heidelberg United, in what will be an intriguing match with former captain Craig Elvin switching sides.



Liam Cannell and Jean Charles Dubois have already looked impressive during pre-season. PHOTO: STEVE STAREK.

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Formed: 1958

Ground Address:

Olympic Park (Village)
Heidelberg West
Mel: 19 D11

VPL Championship:

4 (2001, 1990, 1988, 1975)

President: Nick Katsakis

Coach: George Katsakis

Asst coach: Jeff Olver

Captain: Mark Tsiorlias

Finished last season: 6th

Top Scorer in 09:

Osagie Ederaro 15 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Osagie Ederaro 24 votes (2nd)

Squad List:

Steven Tilovski
Christian Morales
Phil Warner
Luke Byles
Craig Elvin
Steve Martin
Les Doumbalis
Johnny Lazaridis
Yarod Hailenkelot
Josip Kozic
Harry Matkovic
Paul Miller
Rino Muriqi
Rudi Saglam
Johnny Galanos
Saso Aleksovski
Rez Hossaini
Osagie Ederaro
Mark Tsiorlas
Hamid Basma
Junior Melo



The exciting Osagie Ederaro had a stellar year in 2009 and even picked up the Bill Fleming Media Award. Berger fans will hope he can reproduce the goods once again.



Yianni Galanos returns to the VPL after a successful couple of seasons playing in Greece. His experience will be invaluable as Heidelberg look to rebuild. PHOTO: JOHN PUNSHON

New faces take Bergers forward

By John Fotinos

AFTER a disappointing 2009 campaign, culminating in Heidelberg missing a finals berth, Heidelberg looks to the 2010 season with a host of new faces at the club.

Following an off-season which saw the departure of no fewer than ten regular first-team squad members, it will be a new-look team that runs out for the first match in the VPL season proper against Sunshine Georgies next Sunday (Feb 28). The club has been active in the transfer market, signing players from other VPL & State League One clubs, combined with the signing of key defenders from overseas, and some new striking partners for new club skipper Mark Tsiorlas.

Despite only three players remaining from last year's senior list (Tsiorlas, Saglam & Ederaro), the club has promoted three youngsters in Doumbalis, Lazaridis & Heilenkelot up through its Championship winning Under 21 squad of 2009. Returning to the club after previous stints are Kozic & Aleksovski, with the signing of experienced senior

level players such as goalkeeper Tilovski, defenders Elvin & Martin, midfielders Matkovic, Galanos & Miller, and imports Warner & Byles, along with exciting forward prospects Basma, Melo & Muriqi.

The club has made some changes to its coaching personnel, with former club greats Jeff Olver and Andy Bozikas returning to the club as assistant senior coach & Under 21 team coach respectively. These two bring a wealth of experience & know-how back to the club at a time in which stability is needed, given the wholesale changes to the playing list.

Many pundits have predicted that Heidelberg will be amongst the leading candidates for relegation. However, club faithful feel that there is a resolve amongst the playing & coaching group that this side will aim for the upper half of the table in a season which will undoubtedly be filled with many twists and turns. George Katsakis' abilities will be severely tested as he tries to piece together the right combination in what is essentially a brand new team. The challenge lies before him & his team to be ready from Round 1 of the 2010 season.

FOOTNOTE: On a personal note, I wish to acknowledge fine contributions made by, and thank, the following players who have departed from the club & wish them well in any future endeavours - footballing or otherwise.

Peter Gavalas (to Bentleigh Greens)
Peter Roberts (to Port Melbourne - coaching)
Daniel Jones (to Green Gully)
Tony Ouliaris (to Bentleigh Greens)
Eric Vassiliadis (to Port Melbourne - coaching)
Graham Hockless (to Green Gully)
Marinos Gasparis (to South Melbourne)
James Stefanou (to South Melbourne)
Jim Drossos (retired)
Amir Emini



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**Formed:** 1953**Ground Address:**Kevin Bartlett Reserve, F.R. Smith Drive, Richmond
Mel: 45 12**VPL Championships:**

None

President: Helmut Kalitzki**Coach:** Mike Chatzitrifonas**Captain:** TBC**Finished last season:** 10th**Top Scorer in 09:**

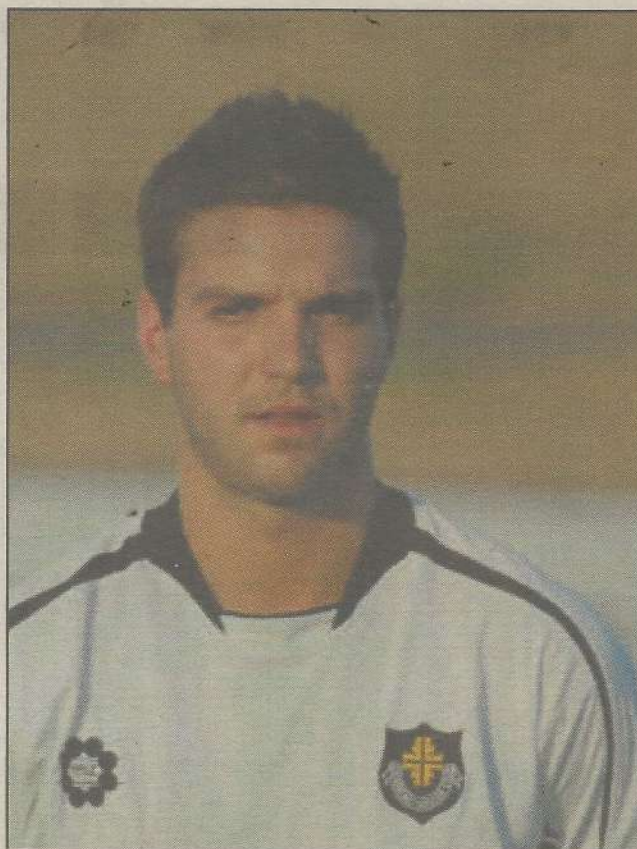
Richie Cardozo 6 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes

Michael Catalano 13 votes (equal 12t)

Squad List:

Ross Antoniadis
Evan Batsis
Michael Catalano
Stjepan Gal
Erhan Karahan
Jesse Krncevic
Antun Kovacic
Milos Lujic
Tom Milardovic
Stefan Piorkowski
Liam Ryan
Peter Sawan
David Scullion
Robbie Simioni
Alex Tabor
Dimitri Tsiaras
Tom Uskok
Andrew Viola
Daniel Visevic
Stuart Wilson



The Eagles will be looking for leadership from Dimitri Tsiaras in the middle of the park.



Daniel Visevic makes a long awaited return to the Eagles' nest after overcoming lengthy injury woes.

EAGLES DARE TO FLY ONCE AGAIN

By Mark Boric

THE 2010 VPL season will mark a fifth successive campaign in the top flight for Richmond SC. Their record of winning on each of the opening games of the league will be put on the line in a home encounter with newly-promoted Northcote City on Sunday.

Though only avoiding relegation by one table place in 2009, a fourteen point margin from the doomed Whittlesea Zebras, as well as riding high on the ladder in the first half of the season meant the club was never seriously in danger of facing the drop. Some experienced signings and the emergence of young midfield prospects Tom Uskok and Peter Sawan in the latter half of the season will lead to expectations of a better showing in the upcoming championship.

The loss of goalkeeper Peter Zois to South Melbourne has seen the club sign Stjepan Gal from St Albans, as well as former No.1 Robbie Simioni rejoining the club after two years at Whittlesea Zebras. Also returning to the club after spells overseas are Antun Kovacic and Jesse Krncevic. Kovacic will join a defence bolstered by the return from a serious groin injury of Erhan Karahan and the signing of

Ross Antoniadis from Whittlesea Zebras. With former captain Stuart McCluskey released, Andrew Viola will again be in the mix to hold a central defensive position after featuring in every game last term after progressing through the Under 21 ranks. In McCluskey's absence the leadership of Tom Milardovic at the back will become more important.

In midfield Dimitri Tsiaras will be joined by another acquisition from the Zebras in Stefan Piorkowski. Well-credentialled Irish recruit David Scullion will add some creativity, with Uskok progressing well after some post-season knee issues. Back issues will see Mate Eterovic's development restricted this season, but another teenager in Stuart Wilson is on the comeback trail after knee surgery. Liam Ryan, a youngster stepping up from the State League Second Division football with Casey Comets, has also joined the club after some promising efforts recent friendlies. The first game of the season should see Michael Catalano mark his fiftieth game for the Eagles after signing from Essendon Royals, Richmond's inaugural VPL opponents, in 2008.

In attack Chatzitrifonos will have numerous options. As well as the return of Krncevic he will welcome the return of Daniel Visevic, who's 2009 season was re-

stricted to just three games by a foot injury. They are joined by last year's mid-season signing, Milos Lujic, and the exciting addition of Alex Tabor from Dandenong Thunder. Former V.I.S. youngster Evan Batsis has also come to Kevin Bartlett Reserve.

Off the park the stability of Helmut Kalitzki's presidency continues. Chatzitrifonos begins his third season at the coaching helm joined by a new assistant, Huss Skenderevic. Skenderevic performed assistant and Under 21's coaching duties in the latter part of 2009 following the departure of Robert Marinkovic to Westgate after getting the head coaching role at the Ardeer Reserve club. Former club great Jim MacLean returns as the new Under 21's coach, assisted by Don MacLaren.

Some mixed pre-season form saw the team struggle for goals until recent efforts against Hume City and Western Suburbs. In two nil-all draws, with beaten 2009 Grand Finalists Dandenong Thunder the Eagles put in good performances in having the better of play on both occasions. The pitch at Kevin Bartlett Reserve is in it's best condition for several years, so the prospect of some great Friday night football in Burnley is high.

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**Formed:** 1972**Ground Address:**

Jack Edwards Reserve
Edward Street, Oakleigh
Mel: 69 H9

VPL Championships:

None

President: Stan Papayiannneris**Coach:** John Anastasiadis**Captain:** Felix Rosman**Finished last season:** 7th**Top Scorer in 09:**

Jerery Karpeh 9 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Felix Rosman 16 votes (8th)

Squad List:

ADRIAN CAGALJ
SCOTT AGUSTIN
DEAN ANASTASIADIS
STELIOS DRAKOS -CAPTAIN
ARI DRAKOS
JOHN FITZGERALD
NEVEN ANTIC
JAMIE CUMMINGS
CAMERON WATSON
SCOTT WEBSTER
SIMON WEBSTER
NICK KALMAR
BILL DAMIANOS
DEAN PANAGOPOULOS
BONNIE OBRADOVIC
MICHAEL CURCIJA
BOIMA (JERRY) KARPEH
RICKY DIACO
BILL GASPARINATOS
SERG STEFANOVIC
LJUBAN (LUBO) PALINIC
ALEX FLOREA

ASSISTANT SENIOR COACH - BILL THEODOR-
OPOULOSYOUTH UNDER 21 COACH - BILL LAMBRO-
POULOSASSISTANT YOUTH UNDER 21 COACH - JOHN
PAMOUKTSIS

GOALKEEPER COACH - DEAN ANASTASIADIS

YOUTH UNDER 21 TEAM MANAGER - THEO
ALEXIOUSENIORS TEAM MANAGER - GEORGE BABAT-
SIASGENERAL MANAGER & MEDIA LIASON
OFFICER - AKI IONNAS

CLUB DOCTOR - DR. NICK STRAGALINOS

CLUB PHYSIO - JOSH TAYLOR

CLUB PHYSIO - CHAD ASHBOLT

SUPPORT STAFF - ERIC MARTIN



Can Jerry Karpeh fire the Cannons' title aspirations this year? PHOTO BY STEVE STAREK

CANNONS PREPARE TO FIRE

By Matthew Gallea

AFTER a disappointing season in 2009, which saw the Oakleigh Cannons finish 7th, John Anastasiadis has made it clear to his team that the minimum expectation of them is to bring finals football back to "Jack's Place".

With the introduction of new coaching staff, a host of new players and more than a fair share of injury problems afflicting the team's progress, it is perhaps a little understandable, in hindsight, that Oakleigh did not reach the heights they are so accustomed to last season.

However, optimism is rife in Oakleigh, and Mr. Anastasiadis is confident that after an initial period of transition, his Cannons will make a return to the elite of the Victorian Premier League and secure a position in the coveted top five. With long serving captain Felix Rosman, creative midfielder Bill Damianos, as well as the mixture of speed and strength of Ricky Diaco and Jerry Karpeh, both of whom have A-League experience with Melbourne Victory and Perth Glory respectively, Oakleigh certainly have a wonderful spine of talent and experience right through the defence

to the final third of the pitch. With a greater emphasis on youth in the squad, the experience of these players will be vital in aiding the development of these younger players, which will not only be important for Oakleigh this season, but also for the club's future.

Despite losing exciting forward Juan Nilo, who scored 51 goals in 135 games for the club, Anastasiadis will be hoping that Michael Curcija, formerly of Altona Magic who has three Australian caps to his name, will be able to form a solid partnership up front with Jerry Karpeh. Karpeh himself had a decent first season at the Cannons, scoring seven goals in sixteen appearances, and the Cannons will hope that he can build on that tally during the upcoming season.

Whilst Anastasiadis is confident that Oakleigh will be able to achieve the goals they have set themselves, he does feel that their preparations for the upcoming season has not been as effective as it perhaps could be. The Hellenic Cup, in which Oakleigh are regular competitors does provide competitive fixtures, particularly in the earlier stages, however Anastasiadis feels that the whole tournament should be revamped, in order to make it much more competitive, or done away with all together. The Cannon's are approaching

the end of the Hellenic Cup, and will take on the newly promoted Bentleigh Greens in the semi final of the competition.

Bentleigh Greens will also be Oakleigh Cannon's first opponents for the 2010 Victorian Premier League season. In fact, Oakleigh could not be happier with their start to the season. Apart from taking on Bentleigh Greens on the first round, the Cannons will also take on another newly promoted team in Northcote City, two matches which they will fancy winning, and would hopefully be a platform from which to build upon for the rest of the season.



Cannons GM. Aki Ionnas, discussing all things football with Jack Reilly.

**Formed:** 1959**Ground Address:**

Bob Jane Stadium
25 Albert Road Drive
Albert Park
Victoria, 3206
Mel: 57 H4

VPL Championships:

8 (2006, 1976, 1974, 1972, 1966, 1965,
1964, 1962)

President: Leo Athanasakis**Coach:** Vaughan Coveny**Captain:** Ramazan Tavsancioglu**Finished last season:** 5th**Top Scorer in 09:**

Fernando De Moraes 7 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Fernando De Moraes 20 votes (4th)

Squad List:

Peter Zois
Rhodri Payne
Steven O'Dor
Daniel Vasilevski
Eddie Cetkin
Joseph Keenan
Carl Recchia
Gianni DeNittis
Joseph Youssef
Yusuf Yusuf
Sam Torrens
Rama Tavsancioglu
Fernando De Moraes
Stiven Mrkela
Marino Gasparis
Sasha Vranesovic
Nathan Caldwell
Stefaan Sardelic
James Stefanou
Sebastian Petrovic



South Melbourne have recruited some big names over the summer including (from top left clockwise) Carl Recchia, Marino Gasparis, James Stefanou, Daniel Vasilevski and Joe Keenan (main picture).

SOUTH MEAN BUSINESS

By George Kouroumalis

SOUTH Melbourne FC will enter the 2010 Victorian Premier League season with the full intention of winning the competition.

The Lakeside club enjoyed a solid 2009 season, reaching the finals before being eliminated in the first week by Hume City. This season will see the club looking to go even deeper into the finals series, whilst in other club news, the side will call Olympic Park home from April as Bob Jane Stadium goes under renovations due to Athletics Victoria moving into the venue.

During the off-season, coach Michael Michalakopoulos resigned citing personal reasons. Michalakopoulos should be credited for the great job he did in steering the club safely away from relegation in 2008, before guiding South into the finals last year. Michalakopoulos also coached South to Hellenic Cup glory last season, after the side swept aside old rivals Heidelberg United 3-0 in the final at John Cain Reserve.

The club moved swiftly to replace Michalakopoulos, appointing retiring South great and former New Zealand international Vaughan Coveny to the post. Coveny returned to Bob

Jane Stadium last year for one final season as a player. The veteran scored five goals, which included bringing up his 100th league goal for South in the ANZAC Day clash against Hume City. Coveny's retirement saw him finish with 295 league games and 102 league goals for South, as well as two National Soccer League titles. Other departures included goalkeeper Tommi Tomich, Con Blatsis (retirement following 122 league games and 5 league goals), Francesco Stella, Goran Zoric, Nick Curtis and Shane Nunes.

Football Director Ange Dallas and his coaching staff set about recruiting good quality players over the summer in the quest to win South's ninth VPL title. Goalkeeper Peter Zois was signed to replace Tomich, whilst centre-back James Stefanou returns to Lakeside after stints with Western Suburbs and Heidelberg. Joining Stefanou from the Bergers is Marinos Gasparis, an exciting attacking player that won the VPL title with Preston in 2007.

Perhaps the three most exciting signings made have been Daniel Vasilevski, Carl Recchia and Joe Keenan, all players with A-League experience. Vasilevski joined from the Newcastle Jets and is capable of playing either in defence or midfield. Recchia joined from Altona Magic, where he enjoyed play-

ing in the central midfield as the Magic won back-to-back VPL championships. Keenan, a midfielder, joins as a free agent following a brief spell with Scottish Premier League side Hibernian.

These signings have shown that coach Coveny is deadly serious about launching a serious assault on the VPL title in 2010. Recchia, Gasparis, Vasilevski and Keenan join Fernando De Moraes, Sebastian Petrovic and Joseph Youssef in competing for midfield positions, though many of these players can play either down back or up front as well. Gianni De Nittis has been in goal scoring form throughout the Hellenic Cup competition and will be looking to continue this in the League season following a quiet 2009.

South opens the League season with a daunting trip to Paisley Park to face defending champions Altona on Sunday February 28. South's first home match will be the following week against newly-promoted Bentleigh Greens, the same side who it will play in the final of the Hellenic Cup. South's final match at Bob Jane Stadium before re-locating to Olympic Park will be against old rivals Heidelberg on April 11.

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Formed: 1979

Ground Address:

Broadmeadows Valley Park Reserve
Corner of Barry Road and Pacoe Vale Road,
Broadmeadows
Mel: 6 G3

VPL Championships: None

President: Sam Isik

Coach: Andy Vlahos

Asst: Leigh Tsoumerkis

Captain: Louie Acevski

Finished last season: 10th

Top Scorer in 09:

Zoran Petrevski 11 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Ross Thompson 25 votes
(Gold Medalist Winner)

Squad List:

Louie Acevski (c)

Mario Roza

Phil Riccobene

Serdar Pir

Isyan Erdogan

Steven Pace

Micheal Bosevski

Mehmet Karakilic

Tansel Baser

Fab Deluzia

Goran Talevski

Ross Thompson

Fonzie Opaza

Richard Cardozo

Dusan Delic

Goran Petrevski

Turhan Sumbul

Ersin Kaya

Jake Nakic

Caner Ucarli



If players of the calibre of Michael Bosevski and Alfonso Opazo can sustain their form throughout the year, then there's no reason Hume City can't go all the way. PHOTO: JOHN PUNSHON

HUME HOLDS HIGH HOPES

By Luke Sheehan

HUME City brought three big-name recruits in the off-season to its already strong line-up that made last year's Victorian Premier League (VPL) preliminary final, in a bid to go that extra step and win the championship this season.

With four days to go until the VPL season kicks off, City look likely to be among the final five in 2010.

Hume playing coach and VPL legend Andy Vlahos said the pre-season has been a tale of two halves.

"It started off pretty well, (even though) we still had a couple of players missing through injury, and a couple of players were overseas," he said.

"Towards the end (of the pre-season), we tried to bleed a few young players coming back from injury, but we didn't get many good results, but the pre-season is just good to see all your options to start the season at round one."

Vlahos said most of the Hume list has stayed with the club for 2010, with the exception of Tony Sterjovski who went back to Preston Lions, Jason Davidson who went overseas and Jonathan Munoz.

However, the entire side might be in for a move elsewhere according to Vlahos, with City's Broadmeadows Valley Park home under a cloud to be fit for State League competition by Hume's first home game.

"At the moment, we're getting it looked at by the council, we don't know if we'll be there round two, round one we're away, round two we've got Dandenong at home. "We're going to get it inspected, it's getting better though. There's just a few patches of sand, after it was re-laid, it's getting much better."

Vlahos said goalkeeper Lou Acevski will again be wearing the captain's armband for season 2010, and Leigh Tsoumerkis will remain assistant coach at City.

Vlahos said City will try to emulate the form that took his side to a preliminary final in 2009, winning two finals against powerhouse clubs South Melbourne and Green Gully.

Hume kick-off its VPL campaign on 27 February against Green Gully at Green Gully Reserve at 3pm.

Ins for 2010: Richard Cardozo (Richmond), Steven Pace (Melbourne Victory), Goran Talevski.

Outs for 2010: Tony Sterjovski (Preston), Jonathon Munoz, Jason Davidson (overseas).

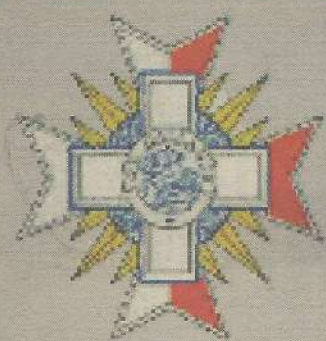
Big pre-season news: Local council is yet to decide whether Broadmeadows Valley Park is fit to be Hume City's home ground in 2010.



Ross Thompson with FFV President Tony Dunkerley and CEO Matt Rendell after winning the Gold Medal last year.



Andy Vlahos hopes to work wonders with his troops once again.

**Formed:** 1947**Ground Address:**

Chaplin Reserve
Anderson Road
Sunshine VIC 3020
Mel: 26 G12

VPL Championships:

1 (1977)

President: Darren Farrugia**Coach:** Andy O'Dell**Captain:** TBC**Finished last season:** 8th**Top Scorer in 09:**

Johnny Sapazovski 6 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Wayne Wallace 25 votes (equal first but ineligible to win due to suspension)

Squad List:

Martin John,
Michael Sacks
Evan Christodoulou
George Papadopoulos
Andrew Nabbout
Matthew Cini
Chris Konstas
Kyle Joryeff
Gary Greenhill
Luke grounds
Joe Carter
Nicholas Davey
Joe Harris
Barry Devlin
Ben Cogger
Fidell Richards
Trent Waterson



You can rest assured that coach Andy O'Dell will demand a competitive contest from his troops.

PHOTO: DARRYL KENNEDY



After being in the running for a finals spot all season the popular Georgies fell agonisingly short in 2009, and will no doubt be itching to put that right this season. PHOTO: DANIEL FLIS

Sun to shine on Georgies?

By Luke Sheehan

SUNSHINE George Cross is about to embark on its second consecutive Victorian Premier League (VPL) season with a new-look side, following several key departures over the summer.

There are just 11 days until round one in the VPL, and coach Andy O'Dell said it has been a tough off-season period for George Cross, marking the club's pre-season as "average".

"I've lost about three-quarters of my team," he said.

"We're still a bit short but I've still got four boys to come over (from the UK), so at the moment we're pretty average.

"I've lost Wayne Wallace, Neal Hooks, Joe Clancy, Nicky Schwal, John Sapazovski, missing those players takes a big hole out of your team. We're a bit underdone."

George Cross has had an indifferent pre-season in terms of results, with one win, one draw, one loss and one unusually abandoned game.

"We've had four practice games, we got beat by Gully 1-0, we beat Richmond 1-0, we drew with Coburg, and we played Heidelberg but the game got abandoned because a boy broke his leg at half time."

Last year, George Cross scored just 18 goals in 22 games, and O'Dell said goals will be a commodity for his side again in 2010.

"Up front we've got the same problem, as we found it hard to score goals. I bought a couple of boys from the UK that have done

average, but I expect them to be better, and hopefully that strengthens the squad and the team."

Sunshine will be expecting big things from former Norwich City front man Nick Davey, who had his first run with the squad in the practice match versus Green Gully, and former Everton Youth squad striker Steven Beck, who comes from the same academy in England as Manchester United superstar Wayne Rooney.

O'Dell said Beck is a standout among the new signings, along with former Perth SC full-back/midfielder Gary Greenhill.

"Gary Greenhill is a very good player, and Steve Beck is a very good player, so those two will stand out more than anybody."

According to O'Dell, George Cross' biggest opponent in 2010 might be its own purse, as it competes with larger-budgeted clubs to draw good players.

"What a lot of people don't understand is that our budget compared to everyone else's is a lot less. We've got a 150,000 dollar budget, and I've had loads of experienced players come from Melbourne Knights and Altona Magic but coming to the dollar, we just can't afford it.

"I've lost and let go lots of players because we can't afford them, you've got your Green Gully's and your Altona Magic's, Hume's...they'll all be spending 450-500 (thousand), so I've got my hands tied behind my back."

O'Dell said the George Cross committee has supported him with his off-season purchases, and the club will find financial salvation through the selling of Chaplin

Reserve.

"The committee have been a fantastic support of me, in terms of trades, and everyone's been paid up from last season, so no one's owed a penny. When we get the money for the selling of the ground we might have a good budget to work on."

Last year's breakout year in the Premier League for George Cross surprised its doubters, but certainly not O'Dell, who conceded it will be a tough effort for Sunshine to back up last year's efforts in 2010.

"Last season, a lot of people picked us to go down (to state league one) and to be honest with you, we under-achieved really. If we had had a goal scorer, we would have given it (the championship) a nudge. But we did quite well last year.

"At the moment, it's going to be a tough year. But I'll just battle away, and hopefully we can stay in the league, anything's a bonus."

Sunshine's season kicks-off on 28 February against Heidelberg at Knights' Stadium, kick off at 7pm.

Ins for 2010: Nick Davey (Norwich City), Barry Devlin (WA), Kyle Joryeff (Andover FC), Gary Greenhill (Perth SC), Adam Dugdale, Michael Sacks (Wingate FC), Luke Grounds (Clifton Hill FC), Chris Konstas, Evan Christodoulou and Andrew Nabbout.

Outs for 2010: Wayne Wallace (returned to England), John Sapazovski, Jack Webster (Bentleigh), Neal Hooks, Joe Clancy, Nick Schwal.



Formed: 1972

Ground Address:

George Andrews Reserve
Trewin Street, Dandenong South
Mel: 90 D11

VPL Championships:

None

President: Driton Maliku

Coach: Stuart Munro

Captain: Veton Korcari

Finished last season:

Minor Premiers
Grand Final Runner-up

Top Scorer in 09:

Joey Di Iorio 17 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

Hamlet Armenian 14 votes (equal 10th)

Squad List:

Stuart Webster
Craig Richards
Jeff Bright
Levan Osman
Arron Wilford
Shane Rexhepi
Hamlet Armenian
Ryan Davidson
Marcus Stergopolous
Joey Diorio
Veton Korcari
Denis Ukali
Mentor Memeti
Shaqir Elmazi
Andrew Bourakis
Jamie Read
Afrim Avdulai
Enes Sivic
Noel Bahnsen
James Mascara
Peter Managmine
Feston Azizi
Murat Abazi
Ibraim Ibraimi
Daniel Neesham
Larry Miller



Can they go one better? The Thunder will once again be looking towards livewire forward Joey Di Iorio for a bagfull of goals and stability at the back from Levent Osman. PHOTO: JOHN PUNSHON

THUNDER PREPARE FOR ANOTHER CRACK

By George Stogiannou

FOR Dandenong Thunder president Driton Maliku, the heartbreak of losing last year's Premier League Grand Final to Altona Magic in a penalty shootout, is still palpable.

"It really hurts me. It's been six or seven months but it feels like the grand final was yesterday."

Despite the hurt, Maliku and the Thunder faithful clearly relished the journey of last season, winning the minor premiership by 12 points. "I really hope we can do the same thing this season. We want to be there again on the big day" says the President.

Coach Stuart Munro has retained virtually the entire squad which made the grand final with the notable exception of midfield playmaker Colin Quirk who has returned to the UK because of visa problems. Munro says of his squad, "To stay together shows how much they think of each other and how much they enjoy being at the club and they obviously enjoy the success which is the biggest thing."

Whilst many pundits consider the Thunder as early favourites, Munro has been around too long to allow complacency to take hold of his side. "We might have a good season and involved in finals and all that kind of stuff, but to go through a season and not lose a game like we did last year for such a long time, is going to be very dif-

ficult. Last year we were a very unknown team and many teams didn't give us a lot of respect until they played us. But they'll be ready for us this year. They'll be wanting to knock us off and that will be more difficult. In a way it's a compliment."

One player certain to attract the attention of opposition defences and coaches, is striker Joe Di Iorio who cast off his mercurial tag by becoming the Premier League's top marksman last season with 18 goals, which amounted to 40 % of Thunder's season total of 45. A remarkable feat given he played most of the first half of the season coming off the substitutes bench. However Munro is still looking at bringing a couple of new strikers to the club because, as he puts it, "If Joey dries up, where are the goals going to come from, because we don't have a high scoring second player. So we need to see if we can get someone in to freshen things or we can use off the bench." Munro is hopeful of signing a Welsh U 23 international striker, subject to visa approval, and the club is also pursuing a striker from Albania.

The departure last season of full backs Jack Hingert and Sam Bailey meant Munro had to juggle his defence going into the finals.

Thunder has looked to bolster the defence by recruiting full backs Craig Richards from the UK who played for South-

ampton as a youth, and Jeff Bright, a left back originally from Victoria who has been plying his trade in Perth, including a stint at Perth Glory.

So what style of football can VPL fans expect from the Thunder team this season? Munro will start the season with his preferred 4-4-2 system and try and stick with it because, as he says, "I love width in a game. I love wingers. To me at times Hamlet (Armenian) is a most frustrating player, but he's also the type I love to see. Wingers who can pass their player, get a cross in and we score a goal from that. To me that's my entertainment. It's not all about being Peles and back heels in the middle of the park." Munro's pragmatism runs deeper still.

You know and I know and the supporters know to be perfectly honest, you could be the most entertaining bunch in the world, but if you can't win those games, you aren't going to be around long. The team aren't going to be around long and the supporters aren't going to be around long."

Dandenong's pre-season has included a lot more preseason friendlies this time round as opposed to a heavy focus on physical preparation.

It's hard to see this well-oiled Thunder outfit seizing up any time soon.

Prediction: Expect a top three finish.



Formed: 1972

Ground Address:

Kingston Heath Soccer Complex, 301-307 Centre Dandenong Road
Cheltenham VIC 3192
Melway REF 87 F2

VPL Championships:

None

President: Con Bios

Coach: Goran Lozanovski

Captain: Peter Gavalas

Finished last season:

State League Runner-up (promoted)

Most Gold Medal Votes:

N/A

Squad List:

Peter Gavalas
George Stavridis
Con Anthopoulos
Craig Smart
Sammy De Vito
George Goutzioulis
Text Apostolikas
Alex Rojas
Luke Fitzpatrick
Craig Metcalfe
Billy Natsioulas
Anthony Ouliaris
Arthur Papadopoulos
Dean Piemonte
Jack Webster
Valibor Mitrovic
Dennis Alilovic
Adam Fadljevic
Clifford Henry
Dado Lokvancic
John Sapazovski
Anthony Salamidis
Mitchell Bassinger



A sign of things to come? Bentleigh Greens got their first taste of silverware this year when it defeated Oakleigh Cannons in the Hellenic Cup final over the weekend. PHOTO: KON DEVAS, Courtesy NEOS KOSMOS

'LOZA', GREENS PLAN FINALS ASSAULT

By Craig MacKenzie

GORAN LOZANOVSKI has engineered a major overhaul of the Bentleigh Greens senior squad with 11 new signings and aims to lead his men into this season's finals.

The former Socceroo star replaced Dean Hennessy in the Kingston Heath hot seat after the club had won promotion from State League Division One last season.

"Look to be honest I thought twice about taking a job on that side of the city but once I spoke to the club and found out how very ambitious they were I decided to take the job," said Lozanovski.

"It's really exciting. The president wants us to finish in the top five and I want us to be in the finals but the club is also moving forward off the field too."

The club's home ground is undergoing a multi-million dollar makeover and now boasts a new covered stand in the outer with seating for 500 and it is hoped that two state-of-the-art synthetic surfaces on the No. 2 and No. 3 grounds will be laid by the end of May.

There won't be much change out of \$1.5 million once the synthetic pitches are laid but it seems right now that money is no object.

Take the new dugouts on the main pitch for example. They were being completed as we went to press at a tidy sum of \$45,000 each.

The clubrooms have been painted, both inside and out, and president Costa Bios can't wait for Friday night's clash with Oakleigh at Jack Edwards Reserve. That contest marks

the Greens' return to elite club football in Victoria, something the club last sampled in 2005.

"We're really looking forward to playing at this level again and already the talk has started about whether we are better or Oakleigh are better," said Bios.

"All I can hope for is that the best team wins. Of course, I'm hoping that we are the best team," he added with a chuckle.

Adding spice to the contest is the presence in the Greens squad of former Oakleigh players George Goutzioulis, Con Anthopoulos, Alex Rojas and Arthur Papadopoulos.

Goutzioulis, signed from Richmond in the off-season, is one of the playing legends of Victorian football, the 32-year-old having played at national league level with South Melbourne Hellas, Sydney Olympic and Auckland while his other VPL clubs have been Port Melbourne and Heidelberg. He also had a couple of seasons in Singapore. Playing for the Greens is something of a homecoming for Goutzioulis who last wore the club's colours as a junior.

Former Young Socceroo defender Anthopoulos adds plenty of Premier League experience and joins after playing an important role as Altona Magic clinched the 2009 finals series. He may well prove crucial to the Greens prospects this season.

Former VIS scholarship holder Alex Rojas has been signed from Oakleigh and likely will be used in an attacking midfield role.

Lozanovski's early off-season player raids centred on financially troubled Heidelberg where he clinched the signatures of central

midfielder Tony Ouliaris, 22-year-old goalkeeper Peter Gavalas, and former Sydney Olympic attacking midfielder Denis Alilovic.

Striker Tex Apostolikas joined from Whittlesea and young defender Jack Webster switched from George Cross along with striker John Sapazovski.

Anthopoulos wasn't the only player plucked from the Magic nest. He's been joined at the Kingston Heath outfit by Adam Fadljevic, who should feel right at home as he also was a teammate of Craig Smart and Craig Metcalfe during his time at Frankston Pines.

One of Lozanovski's most exciting signings could prove to be AIS striker Dado Lokvancic who had been playing with the Australian Institute of Sport in the national youth league.

On the coaching side Lozanovski has hired long-time friend and former teammate Zoran Bizimovski as his assistant.

Lozanovski also had words of encouragement for the younger players in this squad.

"I've had five years in coaching now and last year (as coach of Hume City) I gave Jason Davidson a go and he ended up the Under-21 player of the year and now he's playing overseas," he said.

"I think coaches have to stop being so fearful about giving these young kids their chance. I know from my own experience that if I hadn't been given a chance I would never have achieved what I did as a player."



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Anything can happen at halftime.....

THE MAGI



Thunder's Veton Korcari opens the scoring and sends the Dandy contingent into raptures.



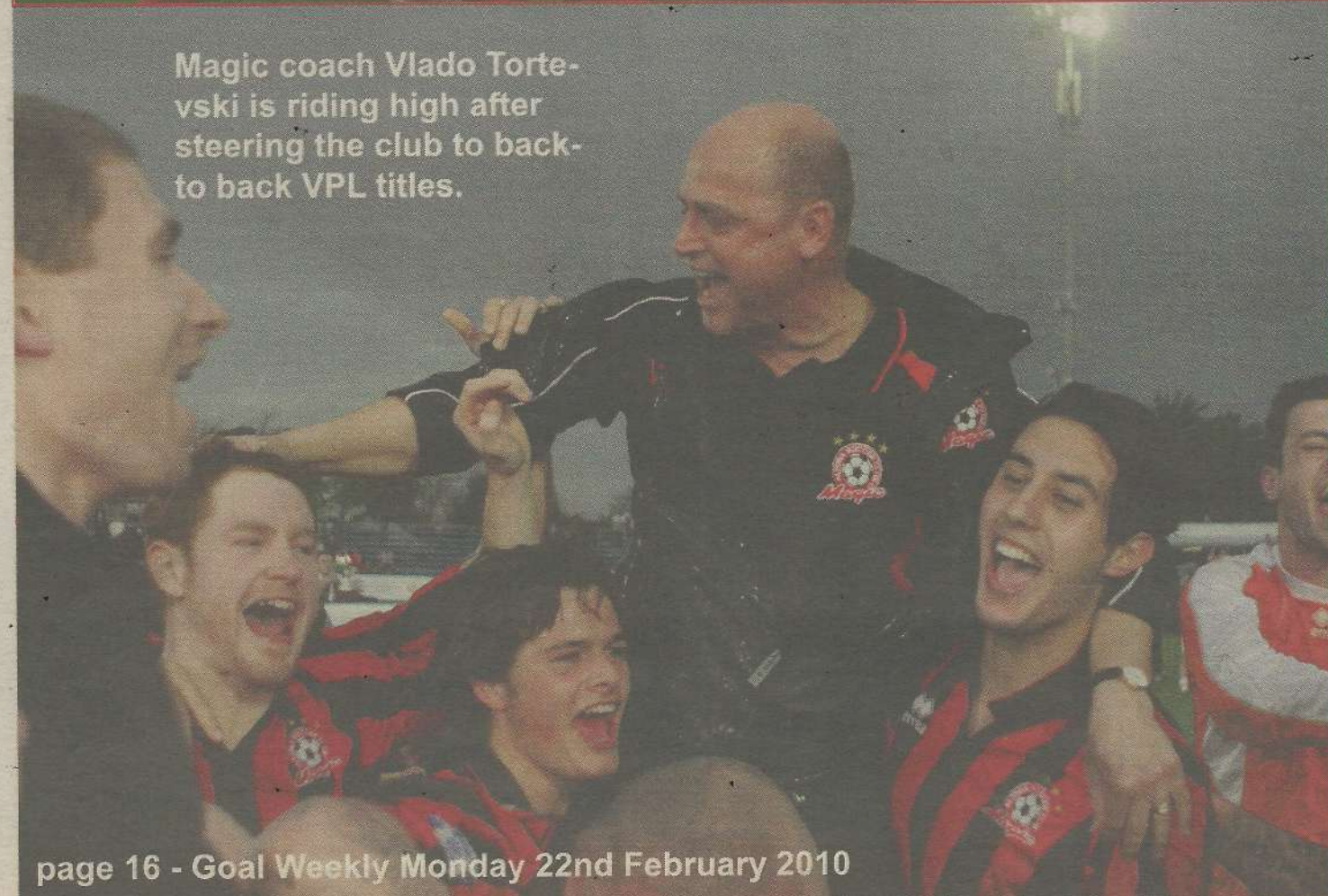
Altona Magic - Victorian Premier

DANDENONG Thunder finished a whopping 12 points clear at the conclusion of the home and away season taking out the Minor Premiership and all before them, after winning promotion to the VPL from the State League the year before.

However, as we all know, finals football can be a different ball game all to-

gether, and Altona Magic wasn't in mood to surrender its crown quite easily. In fact, the Thunder fell to Altona Magic 0-1 in the Major Semi Final before bouncing back to beat Hurst City 3-1 and book a Grand Final clash with the defending champs.

Over 6000 spectators made their way to Bob Jane Stadium last September



Magic coach Vlado Torteovski is riding high after steering the club to back-to-back VPL titles.



Magic's Carl Recchia burns it up in the middle of the park.

C TOUCH!



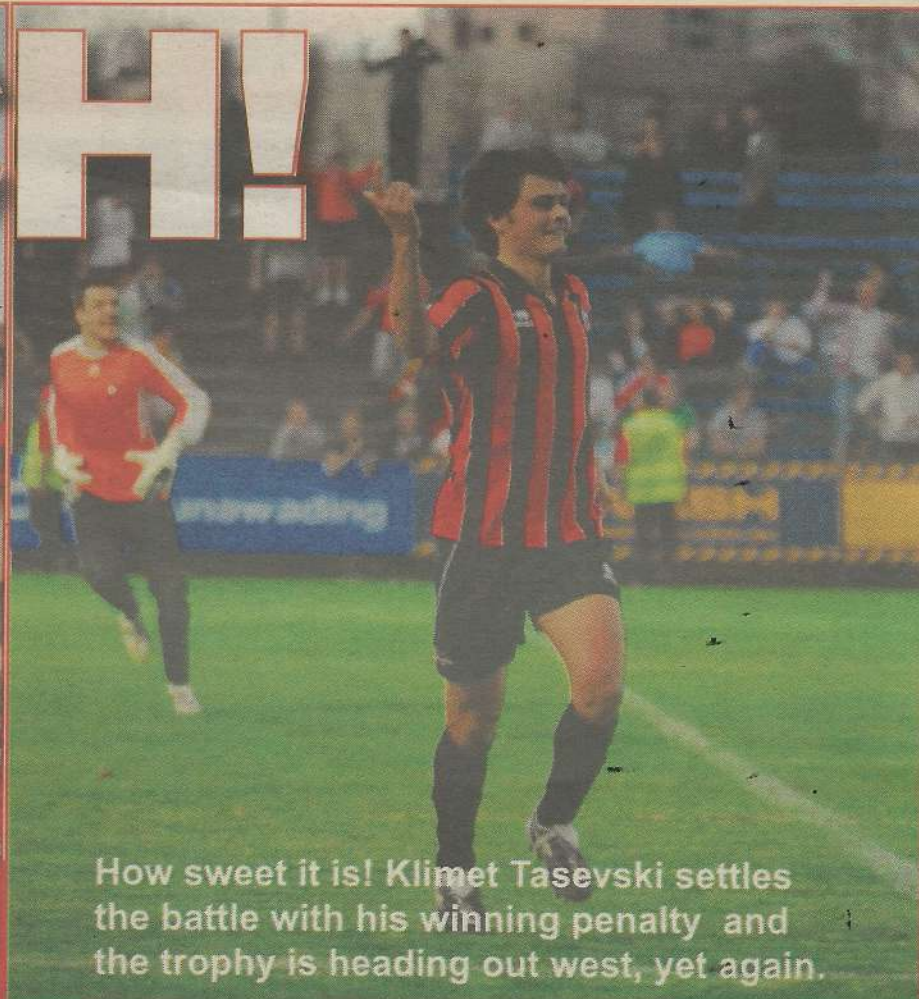
Minor League Champions 2009

to witness a tight final which had the Thunder take the lead through captain Veton Korcari just after the break. The Magic equalised with a penalty from Nicholas Kalmar just after the hour mark and the contest soon became a Titanic struggle. The scores were tied 1-1 after regulation time and extra-time, so it was down to the dreaded

penalty shoot-out to find a winner.

In the end it was the Magic's day thanks to two saves from keeper Nicholas Ragonavic, while Kliment Tasevski sealed back-to-back honours by converting from the spot with the last kick of the season.

Can the Magic make it a hat-trick of titles and repeat the feat of the 90s?



How sweet it is! Kliment Tasevski settles the battle with his winning penalty and the trophy is heading out west, yet again.



Magic's Doug Mladenonovic gets a foot over Ryan Davidson.



Dandenong Thunder - Minor Premiers 2009

Round 1

Tues 23 Feb 7:45PM N.T.C v Sth Melb
Bob Jane Stadium
 Fri 26 Feb 8:30PM Cannons v Bentleigh Greens
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Sat 27 Feb 3PM Green Gully v Hume City
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 27 Feb 7PM Dandy Thunder v Melb Knights
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 28 Feb 3PM Altona Magic v Sth Melb
Paisley Park Soccer Complex Soccer Complex
 Sun 28 Feb 3PM Richmond Eagles v Northcote City
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sun 28 Feb 7PM Georgies v Heidelberg Utd
Knights Stadium

Round 2

Wed 3 Mar 8:30PM N.T.C v Altona Magic
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 5 Mar 8:30PM Cannons v Northcote City
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 5 Mar 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Green Gully
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sat 6 Mar 7PM Georgies v Altona Magic
Knights Stadium
 Sun 7 Mar 3PM Hume City v Dandy Thunder
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 7 Mar 5PM Sth Melb v Bentleigh Greens
Bob Jane Stadium
 Mon 8 Mar 6PM Melb Knights v Heidelberg Utd
Knights Stadium

Round 3

Wed 10 Mar 8:30PM N.T.C v Bentleigh Greens
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 12 Mar 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Altona Magic
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 13 Mar 3PM Northcote City v Sth Melb
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sat 13 Mar 3PM Green Gully v Cannons
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 13 Mar 7PM Dandy Thunder v Richmond Eagles
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 14 Mar 6PM Melb Knights v Georgies
Knights Stadium
 Sun 14 Mar 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Hume City
Olympic Village

Round 4

Wed 17 Mar 8:30PM N.T.C v Northcote City
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 19 Mar 8:30PM Cannons v Dandy Thunder
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 19 Mar 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Heidelberg Utd
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sun 21 Mar 3PM Altona Magic v Northcote City
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 21 Mar 3PM Hume City v Melb Knights
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 21 Mar 3PM Georgies v Bentleigh Greens
Knights Stadium
 Sun 21 Mar 5PM Sth Melb v Green Gully
Bob Jane Stadium

Round 5

Wed 24 Mar 8:30PM N.T.C v Green Gully
To Be Confirmed
 Sat 27 Mar 3PM Northcote City v Bentleigh Greens
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sat 27 Mar 3PM Green Gully v Altona Magic
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 27 Mar 7PM Dandy Thunder v Sth Melb
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 28 Mar 3PM Hume City v Georgies
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 28 Mar 6PM Melb Knights v Richmond Eagles
Knights Stadium
 Sun 28 Mar 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Cannons
Olympic Village

Round 6

Wed 31 Mar 8:30PM N.T.C v Dandy Thunder
To Be Confirmed
 Wed 7 Apr 8:30PM N.T.C v Heidelberg Utd
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 9 Apr 8:30PM Cannons v Melb Knights
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 9 Apr 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Green Gully
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Fri 9 Apr 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Hume City
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sat 10 Apr 7PM Altona Magic v Dandy Thunder
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 11 Apr 3PM Sth Melb v Heidelberg Utd
Bob Jane Stadium
 Sun 11 Apr 7PM Georgies v Northcote City
Knights Stadium

Round 7

Wed 14 Apr 8:30PM N.T.C v Melb Knights
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 16 Apr 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Georgies
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sat 17 Apr 3PM Green Gully v Northcote City
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 17 Apr 7PM Dandy Thunder v Bentleigh Greens
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 18 Apr 3PM Heidelberg Utd v Altona Magic
Olympic Village
 Sun 18 Apr 3PM Melb Knights v Sth Melb
Knights Stadium
 Sun 18 Apr 3PM Hume City v Cannons
Broadmeadows Valley Park

Round 8

Wed 21 Apr 8:30PM N.T.C v Hume City
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 23 Apr 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Heidelberg Utd
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 24 Apr 3PM Northcote City v Dandy Thunder
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sun 25 Apr 3PM Altona Magic v Melb Knights
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 25 Apr 3PM Green Gully v Georgies
To Be Confirmed
 Sun 25 Apr 3PM Hume City v Sth Melb
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Mon 26 Apr 7PM Cannons v Richmond Eagles
Jack Edwards Reserve

Round 9

Wed 28 Apr 8:30PM N.T.C v Richmond Eagles
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 30 Apr 8:30PM Cannons v Georgies
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 30 Apr 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Sth Melb
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sun 2 May 3PM Dandy Thunder v Green Gully
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 2 May 3PM Melb Knights v Bentleigh Greens
Knights Stadium
 Sun 2 May 3PM Hume City v Altona Magic
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 2 May 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Northcote City
Olympic Village

Round 10

Wed 5 May 8:30PM N.T.C v Cannons
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 7 May 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Hume City
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 8 May 3PM Green Gully v Heidelberg Utd
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 8 May 7PM Altona Magic v Richmond Eagles
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 9 May 3PM Northcote City v Melb Knights
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sun 9 May 5PM Sth Melb v Cannons
Bob Jane Stadium
 Mon 10 May 8:30PM Georgies v Dandy Thunder
Knights Stadium

Round 11

Wed 12 May 8:30PM N.T.C v Georgies
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 14 May 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Bentleigh Greens
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sun 16 May 3PM Altona Magic v Cannons
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 16 May 3PM Melb Knights v Green Gully
Knights Stadium
 Sun 16 May 3PM Hume City v Northcote City
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 16 May 5PM Sth Melb v Georgies
Bob Jane Stadium
 Sun 16 May 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Dandy Thunder
Olympic Village

Round 12

Wed 19 May 8:30PM N.T.C v Sth Melb
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 21 May 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Cannons
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 22 May 3PM Northcote City v Richmond Eagles
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sun 23 May 3PM Hume City v Green Gully
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 23 May 5PM Sth Melb v Altona Magic
Bob Jane Stadium
 Sun 23 May 6PM Melb Knights v Dandy Thunder
Knights Stadium
 Sun 23 May 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Georgies
Olympic Village

Round 13

Wed 26 May 8:30PM N.T.C v Altona Magic
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 28 May 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Sth Melb
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 29 May 3PM Green Gully v Richmond Eagles
Green Gully Reserve
 Sun 30 May 3PM Northcote City v Cannons
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sun 30 May 3PM Altona Magic v Georgies
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 30 May 3PM Dandy Thunder v Hume City
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 30 May 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Melb Knights
Olympic Village

Round 14

Wed 2 Jun 8:30PM N.T.C v Bentleigh Greens
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 4 Jun 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Dandy Thunder
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sat 5 Jun 7PM Altona Magic v Bentleigh Greens
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 6 Jun 3PM Hume City v Heidelberg Utd
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 6 Jun 5PM Sth Melb v Northcote City
Bob Jane Stadium
 Mon 7 Jun 8:15PM Cannons v Green Gully
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Mon 7 Jun 8:30PM Georgies v Melb Knights
Knights Stadium

Round 15

Wed 9 Jun 8:30PM N.T.C v Northcote City
To Be Confirmed
 Wed 16 Jun 8:30PM N.T.C v Green Gully
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 18 Jun 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Georgies
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 19 Jun 3PM Northcote City v Altona Magic
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sat 19 Jun 3PM Green Gully v Sth Melb
Green Gully Reserve
 Sun 19 Jun 7PM Dandy Thunder v Cannons
George Andrews Reserve
 Mon 20 Jun 3PM Melb Knights v Hume City
Knights Stadium
 Mon 20 Jun 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Richmond Eagles
Olympic Village

Round 16

Wed 23 Jun 8:30PM N.T.C v Dandy Thunder
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 25 Jun 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Northcote City
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Fri 25 Jun 8:30PM Cannons v Heidelberg Utd
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 25 Jun 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Melb Knights
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sat 26 Jun 7PM Altona Magic v Green Gully
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 27 Jun 5PM Sth Melb v Dandy Thunder
Bob Jane Stadium
 Mon 28 Jun 8:30PM Georgies v Hume City
Knights Stadium

Round 17

Wed 7 Jul 8:30PM N.T.C v Heidelberg Utd
To Be Confirmed
 Sat 10 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Georgies
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sat 10 Jul 3PM Green Gully v Bentleigh Greens
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 10 Jul 7PM Dandy Thunder v Altona Magic
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 11 Jul 3PM Hume City v Richmond Eagles
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 11 Jul 3PM Melb Knights v Cannons
Knights Stadium
 Sun 11 Jul 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Sth Melb
Olympic Village

Round 18

Wed 14 Jul 8:30PM N.T.C v Melb Knights
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 16 Jul 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Dandy Thunder
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 17 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Green Gully
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sat 17 Jul 7PM Altona Magic v Heidelberg Utd
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Sun 18 Jul 5PM Sth Melb v Melb Knights
Bob Jane Stadium
 Mon 19 Jul 8:15PM Cannons v Hume City
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Mon 19 Jul 8:30PM Georgies v Richmond Eagles
Knights Stadium

Round 19

Wed 21 Jul 8:30PM N.T.C v Hume City
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 23 Jul 8:30PM Richmond Eagles v Cannons
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sat 24 Jul 7PM Dandy Thunder v Northcote City
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 25 Jul 3PM Melb Knights v Altona Magic
Knights Stadium
 Sun 25 Jul 3PM Heidelberg Utd v Bentleigh Greens
Olympic Village
 Sun 25 Jul 5PM Sth Melb v Hume City
Bob Jane Stadium
 Mon 26 Jul 8:30PM Georgies v Green Gully
Knights Stadium

Round 20

Wed 28 Jul 8:30PM N.T.C v Richmond
To Be Confirmed
 Fri 30 Jul 8:30PM Bentleigh Greens v Melb Knights
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sat 31 Jul 3PM Green Gully v Dandy Thunder
Green Gully Reserve
 Sat 31 Jul 3PM Northcote City v Heidelberg Utd
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sat 31 Jul 7PM Altona Magic v Hume City
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
 Mon 1 Aug 3PM Georgies v Cannons
Knights Stadium
 Mon 1 Aug 5PM Sth Melb v Richmond Eagles
Bob Jane Stadium

Round 21

Wed 4 Aug 8:30PM N.T.C v Cannons
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Fri 6 Aug 8:30PM Cannons v Sth Melb
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Sat 7 Aug 7PM Dandy Thunder v Georgies
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 8 Aug 3PM Richmond Eagles v Altona Magic
Kevin Bartlett Reserve
 Sun 8 Aug 3PM Hume City v Bentleigh Greens
Broadmeadows Valley Park
 Sun 8 Aug 3PM Melb Knights v Northcote City
Knights Stadium
 Sun 8 Aug 7PM Heidelberg Utd v Green Gully
Olympic Village

Round 22

Wed 11 Aug 8:30PM N.T.C v Georgies
To Be Confirmed
 Sun 15 Aug 3PM Dandy Thunder v Heidelberg Utd
George Andrews Reserve
 Sun 15 Aug 3PM Green Gully v Melb Knights
Green Gully Reserve
 Sun 15 Aug 3PM Northcote City v Hume City
John Cain Memorial Park
 Sun 15 Aug 3PM Bentleigh Greens v Richmond Eagles
Kingston Heath Soccer Complex
 Sun 15 Aug 3PM Cannons v Altona Magic
Jack Edwards Reserve
 Sun 15 Aug 3PM Georgies v Sth Melb
Knights Stadium

PREVIOUS VPL CHAMPIONS

2009 Altona Magic	2000 Green Gully Cavaliers
2008 Altona Magic	(No finals series)
2007 Preston Lions	1999 Green Gully Cavaliers
2006 South Melbourne	(No finals series)
2005 Green Gully Cavaliers	1998 Bulleen Inter Kings
2004 Bulleen Zebras	1997 Altona Magic
2003 Green Gully Cavaliers	1996 Altona Magic
2002 Preston Lions	1995 Altona Magic
2001 Heidelberg United	1994 Preston Lions

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- Top Goalkeeper Equipment



Formed: 1960

Ground Address:

John Cain Memorial Park
281 darebin Road Thorbury 3071
Mel: 31 A6

VPL Championships:

None

President: Jim Makrozohopoulos

Coach: Peter Tsolakis

Captain: Trent Rixon

Finished last season:

Champions of State League Division One

Top Scorer in 09:

Trent Rixon 17 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes:

N/A

Squad List:

Goalkeepers

1. Nick Gountaras Age:30
21. Chris Petropoulos 23
30. Rob Graskoski 38
25. Nick Kostadinovski 16

Defenders

2. Adrian Chiappetta 22
3. Bradley Norton 19
5. George Papadopoulos 33
11. Harry Kinigopoulos 33
12. Hayden D'Agostino 20
16. Paul Savio 25
17. Marco Rosano 26

Midfielders

4. Antoni Jankovski 25
6. Nick Curtis 23
7. Jim Archimandritis 27
8. Mark McGough 22
10. John Theofilopoulos 33
14. Eddie Soares 25
15. Paul Retre 16
19. Jonathan Voulgaris 17
20. Nick Tzoulis 20

Forwards

9. Trent Rixon 25
13. George Giannou 23 (Most Likely out for season with ACL injury)
18. James Kalafatidis 19
22. Elias Vitsenzatos 18
23. Ahmet Turer 19



Northcote City are finally in the big time and hope to cause a few upsets along the way.

Blues - Answers are in Youth

By Tony Persoglia

AFTER almost two decades in the State League wilderness, Northcote City return to the Victorian Premier League with much of the same squad that achieved promotion by winning the Division 1 Championship in 2009.

Former South Melbourne great Peter Tsolakis has built a youthful squad with a leaning towards attractive football, a trait which promoted clubs often overlook in favour of a dour results-driven focus.

Administratively, the club has favoured a somewhat conservative approach, opening the cheque-book only on players it feels will complement the existing squad as opposed to securing experienced playmakers in search for a final payday before retirement. Although some may consider this a noble initiative, it illustrates the philosophy of a committee with a long-term vision for success. This is not to say that Northcote City does not have some talent on its playing roster.

The Darebin based club has also opted to persist with Saturday afternoon home fixtures, having built a solid supporter base in its two championship campaigns. The

playing surface is in the best condition it has been for many a season, and will provide an appropriate arena for attractive, attacking football.

Northcote City's promotion was evidenced by the performance of their inspirational captain Trent Rixon, who secured the Division 1 Best-and-Fairest in the club's championship year. The influential striker dropped down a division to join the club in 2006, and with 36 goals to his credit in the past two seasons, will be hoping that he can replicate that kind of form in City's return to the top flight. He is clearly the player to watch as the club takes its first tentative steps amongst Victoria's elite.

Partnering Rixon up-front, the club is relying upon youngsters Ahmet Turer (South Melbourne) and James Kalafatidis (Clifton Hill) to fill the void left by George Giannou, who appears set to miss the 2010 campaign after tearing an anterior-cruciate ligament in his knee during the off-season. The midfield is led by the club's Best-and-Fairest winner Mark McGough, who at just 22 continues to develop with each season. He will be joined by Nick Curtis (South Melbourne) who will be hoping for an injury-free year, as well as Jim Archiman-

dritis, Eddie Soares and Antoni Jankovski, all solid contributors in 2009.

The defence will welcome newcomers in Bradley Norton, who has spent the summer plying his trade with the Melbourne Victory NYL squad, and Hayden D'Agostino, who makes the switch from the Whittlesea Zebras. At 19 and 20, their recruitment is another example of the club's desire to promote youth in favour of emptying the club coffers for instant results. Experienced heads in the form of Harry Kingiopoulos and George Papadopoulos will no doubt ensure that the new arrivals get the necessary support in the hustle and bustle of the Premier League.

The club's pre-season form has been reasonable, with good results against Melbourne Knights (1-0), Dandenong Thunder (1-1) and Green Gully (0-0). Even in their most recent loss to South Melbourne (3-0) in the Hellenic Cup, the team attempted to play 'football' against an opposition that has looked extremely impressive in February. However, the performances that matter most will come in the winter months, and Northcote City appear well prepared for the long battle to maintain its Premier League status.



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WAG OF THE WEEK



Amanda Harrington Age: 27

Insignificant Other: Newcastle Utd Midfielder, Joey Barton.



COUCH POTATO DEPT.

SETANTA SPORTS

Monday 22nd February

5am Serie A Lazio vs Palermo
6:40am Serie A Bari vs Milan LIVE
9am Bundesliga Freiburg vs Hertha Berlin
10:45am Bundesliga Werder Bremen vs B Leverkusen
2:15pm Eredivisie PSV vs Sparta Rotterdam
4pm Ligue 1 Marseille vs Nancy

Tuesday 23rd February

4am Ligue 1 Rennes vs Lille

Wednesday 24th February

6:40am Euro League/Cup Teams TBC LIVE

Thursday 25th February

6:40am Euro League/Cup Teams TBC LIVE
12:30pm Copa Lib Flamengo vs U Catolica LIVE

Saturday 27th February

6:30am Bundesliga Schalke vs Bor Dortmund LIVE
2:45pm Setanta Sports Cup St Patricks vs Linfield

Sunday 28th February

4:30am Bundesliga Bayer Leverkusen vs FC Koln LIVE
7am Ligue 1 Montpellier vs Rennes LIVE
9:15am SPL Aberdeen vs Hearts
12:45pm Ligue 1 Lyon vs Nice
11:30pm SPL 'Old Firm Derby' Rangers vs Celtic LIVE

Monday 1st March

1:30am Bundesliga Hannover vs Wolfsburg LIVE
3:30am Bundesliga Bayern Munich vs Hamburg LIVE
7am Ligue 1 PSG vs Marseille LIVE
9am Serie A Napoli vs Roma
10:45am Serie A Udinese vs Internazionale
2:15pm Eredivisie Ajax vs FC Utrecht
4pm Ligue 1 Lille vs Auxerre

one HD

Monday 1st March

5:30 pm Football: Bundesliga (Rpt) Matchday 24 - Mainz V Werder Bremen
7:30 pm Football: FA Classics G.F.A. Cup 5th Round 1993/94 Wimbledon V Manchester United
08:00 pm Football: Bundesliga Weekly Highlights Matchday 24
10:00 pm World Football News
11:00 pm The Magic Of The FA Cup - Newcastle United's Greatest Goals

Tuesday 2nd March

7:30 am Serie A Matchday 26 - Napoli V Roma

Wednesday 3rd March

7:30 am Bundesliga (Rpt) - Mainz V Werder Bremen
5:00 pm The Serie A Highlights Show Matchday 26

Thursday 4th March

2:00 pm Football: Bundesliga Weekly Highlights (Rpt) Matchday 24
5:00 pm Serie A (Rpt) Matchday 26 - Napoli V Roma

Saturday 6th March

4:15 am Bundesliga Weekly Highlights (Rpt)
5:15 am The Serie A Highlights Show (Rpt)

Sunday 7th March

4:25 am LIVE: Football: Bundesliga Matchday 25 - Cologne V Bayern Munich

FOX SPORTS

Wed Feb-24 Man United v West Ham 6.55 am (Fox 1)

* Wolves v Chelsea not being shown

Sat Feb 27 Chelsea v Man City 11.40 pm (Fox 1)
Sun Feb 28 Bolton v Wolves 1.55 am (Fox 1)
Sun Feb 28 Burnley v Portsmouth 1.55 am (Fox 3)
Sun Feb 28 Stoke v Arsenal 4.25 am (Fox 1)
Sun Feb 28 Birmingham v Wigan 11.00 am (DELAY)
Sun Feb 28 Tottenham v Everton 11.55 pm (Fox 2)
Mon Mar 1 Sunderland v Fulham 1.55 am (Fox 1)

* Liverpool v Blackburn not being shown

* Hull v Aston Villa postponed due to Carling Cup Final



The Victorian Football Show
Every Wednesday 8pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday 10.30am



BLAST FROM THE PAST

With Roy Hay



The all-conquering Altona Magic side from the mid-nineties.



Simon Micevski celebrates Sash Becvinovski's first goal for Altona Magic. Photo: Joe Sabljak.

CUTTING IT FINE

A Magic finale with a hair-raising conclusion in 1996

Altona Magic won back-to-back Victorian Premier League titles after one of the closest finishes in Victorian Premier League history in a pulsating grand final against Heidelberg United at Middle Park on 15 September 1996.

After taking the minor premiership by three points from Heidelberg, Altona was favoured to win, but the major semifinal between the two clubs was scoreless and it went to five-four on penalties in Heidelberg's favour. So the Magic had to take on Chris Taylor's Green Gully in the preliminary final. Goals by Henry Velkovski and Nick Georgopoulos late in the game saw it through to rematch with Heidelberg in the Grand Final.

Peter Desira described the grand final as 'a great advertisement for Victorian state soccer.' Sash Becvinovski opened the scoring for the Magic against the run of play after 20 minutes, then Bobby Despotovski hit the post 18 minutes later and Andy Vlahos slotted in the rebound. The second half was as tight as the first until Dean Fak sliced an attempted clearance over keeper Glenn Clarke to give Altona the advantage. Fak was under pressure at the time from Nick Georgopoulos and Henry Velkovski. Much turns on who got the final touch as we will see in a moment.

Despotovski equalised again for Heidelberg with eleven minutes to go after a powerful run and pass from Steve Iosifidis. So it was two-all at the end of normal time and into extra-time. Zoran Petrevski was brought down in the box by Leigh Tsoumerkass and Becvinovski got his second goal from the penalty spot to put the Magic ahead for the third time. But Heidelberg refused to buckle and with five



Gary Cole in his playing days, when he had hair. Photo: Lawrie Schwab collection, probably by Les Shorrock, Deakin University Library.

minutes left, Dean Fak made up for the earlier mistake with another equaliser.

So it took a penalty shoot-out to decide the title. Darren McGrath was the hero for the Magic, saving Brian McNicol's spot-kick, while all five Magic players converted theirs. Henry Velkovski's final penalty almost caused coach Gary Cole to lose his hair, since he had promised to have it shaved off if the midfielder scored the winning goal.

In 2010 he told me that his bet with Velkovski was that the latter would not score in normal play, so the penalty did not count. But he admitted that his wife had told him, 'There

is no way you are having your head shaved.' 'Since I liked my food and having my shirts ironed, I did not cut off my hair,' he said.

Brian McNicol had an outstanding match for Heidelberg and deservedly won the Jimmy Rooney Medal. Peter Desira credited him with orchestrating the Bergers' fight back after it went behind three times in the match. So it was very cruel that his penalty miss was critical in the final result.

Gary Cole was coach of the year and Altona Magic went on to complete a three-in-a-row series of Premier League victories the following year.

Final Table

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Altona Magic	26	18	2	6	58	25	56
Heidelberg United	26	16	5	5	63	29	53
Sundhine Georgies	26	16	4	6	38	32	52
Bentleigh Greens	26	15	4	7	48	34	49
Green Gully Cavaliers	26	12	10	4	51	30	46
Thomastown Zebras	26	13	7	6	46	33	46
Port Melbourne Sharks	26	11	9	6	59	42	42
Bulleen Lions	26	8	9	9	33	40	33
Nth Geelong Warriors	26	8	5	13	28	44	29
Albion Red Sox	26	5	6	15	26	43	21
St Albans Saints	26	5	6	15	31	49	21
Box Hill Inter	26	5	6	15	27	54	21
Fawkner Blues	26	4	7	15	24	49	19
Springvale City Vales	26	3	6	17	31	59	15

Victorian Premier League Grand Final

Bob Jane Stadium, Middle Park

Sunday 15 September 1996.

Attendance: 5,432

Referee: Cain Naumceviski.

Heidelberg United 3 (Andy Vlahos 38', Bobby Despotovski 79', Dean Fak 115')

Altona Magic 3 (Sash Becvinovski 19', 99' pen., Dean Fak, own goal, 60')

Altona Magic won on 5-3 on penalties: Becvinovski (1-0), MacNicol (saved); Georgopoulos (2-0), Svigos (2-1); Markovski (3-1), Scott (3-2); Atanasovski (4-2), Tsoumerkass (4-3), Velkovski (5-3).

Heidelberg United

Glenn CLARKE, Leigh TSOUMERKAS, Alan SCOTT, Dean FAK, Tom KARAPATSOS, Brian Macnicol, Steve IOSIFIDIS, George SVIGOS, Con BOUTSIANIS (Gary HASLER 100), Bobby DESPOTOVSKI, Andy VLAHOS. Coach: Dusan BRNOVIC.

Altona Magic

Darren McGRATH, Zdravko ATANASOVSKI, Marjan TASEVSKI, Robert RUNJE, Simon MICEVSKI, Tom MARKOVSKI, Zoran PETREVSKI, Nick GEORGOPOULOS, Sash BECVINOVSKI, Henry VELKOVSKI, George PETROV. Coach: Gary COLE.

Jimmy Rooney Medal:
Brian MacNicol (Heidelberg United)

Thanks to Greg Stock and John Punshon of the OZ Football website for results, line-ups and table.



V-LEAGUE



PREMIERSHIP

ROUND 18
REVIEW



FUTSAL TITLE SHAKE-UP

By Adam Hussein

Pascoe Vale FC 11 vs 10 FC Essendon 7:15pm

Pascoe Vale FC opened the nights V-League proceedings with a convincing win over champions FC Essendon. Superstar striker Simon Lamanda destroyed Essendon with 6 goals, and he opened the nights scoring turning and shooting in the first minute. Barbosa linked up well with Grigic for 2-0, Grigic then scored a simple finish from close range 3-0, Simon slapped one in the pigeon hole 4-0, Bosnjak had the first real chance for Essendon and hit the upright and then Mesquita scored a screamer 5-0 past a helpless Stanojevic. Lamanda gave the ball away cheaply in front of his own D and Alexander pounced to restore some pride 5-1. The second half was a completely different story with FC Essendon firing goals past a helpless Karagounis in the complacent Pascoe Vale goals. The score was 10-10 in an amazing Essendon fightback; Barbosa broke the champion's hearts with a winner 2 minutes from time. The race for the golden boot heats up as Alexander finished the night with 6 goals along with Simon Lamanda in what was a goal scoring fest.

Ashburton FC 8 vs 4 Albert Park FC 8:00pm

The green machine Ashburton coached by the Victorian Mens team Coach Paul 'the log' Vidic battled with relegation threatened Albert Park. The game was a tight affair, Nalpanitidis the lethal left foot striker rattled the bar for Ashburton early just prior to football superstar William Dixon scoring from a side ball 1-0. Savva Pattikis was shooting from everywhere for Albert Park FC and he beat Prosic in the Ashburton goal from a cheeky near post corner. A Spijodic free kick was chipped brilliantly by Diego Assaeda over the rushing Albert Park Goalkeeper Michael Chami for Dixon to volley home. Spijodic was then causal and lost out to Filipovic. Dixon juggled past the entire Albert Park defence, and scored an amazing career high 6 goals for Ashburton. He was instrumental in securing 3 points for Ashburton and linked up well with Bill Nalpanitidis. Bill sealed the deal and banished Albert Park to 9th, threatened by relegation to the Sunday State League.



Last year's champs, Essendon, succumbed to Pascoe Vale.

North Melbourne FC 3 vs 5 FC Prahran 8:45pm

Table toppers North Melbourne FC were rampaged by hungry Futsal Oz Souvlaki Hut cup winners FC Prahran. Dima Shakanov made a return from suspension in goal for Prahran and made numerous good saves early. Futsalroo Jonathan Barrientos shot early, won a corner that Pedic smashed into the crossbar. Muktar then took a short side ball that looked innocuous, Haider Noor had very little time or space and slapped the ball into the top left corner 1-0 FCP. Mogai, Haider & Muktar linked up well with an orthodox back post Futsal goal 2-0. North Melbourne was saved by a clever piece of play from Jon Barrientos who sidestepped Avram (FCP) and slotted home as he slipped. 2-1 at half time and North was back in it. The second half started with a bang and North missed several golden opportunities before Muktar and Avram scored vital 3rd and 4th goals for Prahran. Pedic (NMFC) deflected a Mihelakis shot past Shakanov for 4-2, Pedic hit the bar again, North had a shot off the post and off the line before Haider scored vital number 5 for Prahran, Colby scored a consolation late on into an open goal. North have been knocked off the top of the ladder as the title race heats up.

FC Geelong 4 vs 3 Melbourne Uni FC 9:30pm

Melbourne University destined for relegation play offs again took on fellow lowly placed Geelong FC who have been getting better and better every week. They won a vital 3 points in a tense affair. Edwards squeezed past the pink panther for Melbourne Uni to lead 1-0 early. Eric Huyn doubled Melbourne Uni's lead over slow starting Geelong who had

conceded few goals in the past few weeks. They got back into the contest via a clumsy challenge from Melbourne Uni goalkeeper Joseph Huang, Adrian Bond slotting the resulting penalty. Melbourne Uni found themselves down 5 fouls, Geelong missed the first but Ravel Tavares finished the second 6th foul penalty. At 2-2 the game was on for cats and dogs! Riddle hit the post twice on debut for Geelong, Bond played a superb pass to Tavares to score the vital 3-2 for Geelong, Sheen made it 4-2 with a neat back post finish and it looked like the 3 points were heading down the highway. Huyn scored a last ditch goal for Melbourne University 4-3, it made for a nervy finish but Geelong are getting closer and closer to safety, Melbourne Uni looks doomed to relegation playoffs.

FC Carlton 6 vs 2 Doncaster FC 10:15pm

The last match of the night saw FC Carlton take on Doncaster. Doncaster surprised the crowd with 2 early goals to Bill Giannikos. It took Carlton time to get going, but they are definitely the dark horse of the V-league with established orthodox futsal players in Erin Ozdemir, Brenno Polatti, Hamid Hassanikhoo & Mus Alor. Hassanikhoo hit the post before Polatti closed down Vlahos scoring a freak goal via a deflection. Carlton was back in the game and they never looked back. Kounnas missed a golden opportunity to score Doncasters 3rd. Carlton took the opportunity to punish helpless Doncaster with Brenno 'BP' Polatti scoring from everywhere. Ozdemir squeezed one in past Markis and Mus Elvis Alor got in on the act before BP rounded off the night with a composed 6-2 finish.

Fitzroy FC vs Metropolitan FC postponed

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LADDER

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GDP
1 FC Pascoe Vale FC	17	13	0	4	130	82	48 39
2 Nth Melbourne FC	17	12	1	4	116	70	46 37
3 Fitzroy FC	17	11	2	4	112	68	44 35
4 FC Carlton	17	9	4	4	73	57	16 31
5 Ashburton FC	17	10	1	6	98	85	13 31
6 FC Prahran	18	8	5	5	106	92	14 29
7 Metropolitan FC	17	8	2	7	99	77	22 26
8 FC Essendon	17	7	0	10	97	108	-11 21
9 Albert Park FC	18	7	0	11	89	111	-22 21
10 FC Geelong	18	5	3	10	56	105	-49 18
11 Melbourne Uni FC	17	2	1	14	53	110	-57 7
12 Doncaster FC	18	2	1	15	58	122	-64 7

Rd 18 Results Wed Feb 17

Pascoe Vale FC v FC Essendon 11 - 10
Ashburton FC v Albert Park FC 8 - 4
Nth Melbourne FC v FC Prahran 3 - 5
FC Geelong v Melb Uni FC 4 - 3
FC Carlton vs Doncaster FC 6 - 2

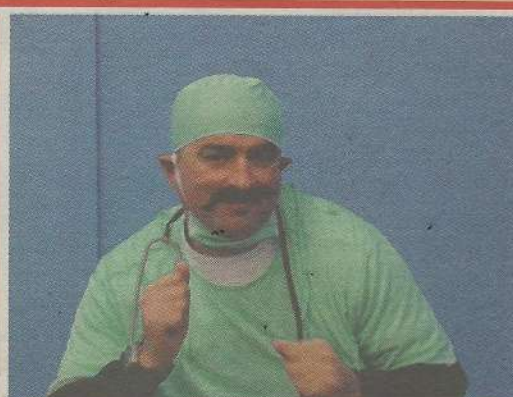
Rd 19 Clashes Wed Feb 24

6:30 Nth Melbourne FC v Melb Uni FC
7:15 Doncaster FC v FC Prahran
8:00 Pascoe Vale FC v Fitzroy FC
8:45 FC Carlton v Ashburton FC
9:30 FC Essendon v Albert Park FC
10:15 FC Geelong v Metropolitan FC

Top Goal Scorers

1. H.Noor FCP 44 goals
2. A.Redzepovic MFC 43 goals
3. J.Blackburn FFC 41 goals
4. A.Stevanovic FGE 41 goals
5. F.De Moreas NMFC 30 goals
6. M.Avram FCP 29 goals

The LEGEA V-LEAGUE premierships has a fantastic supporter base and growing. The Futbol Town Show is our weekly highlights package which is aired on futsaloz.com and on Channel 31, 7pm every Monday.



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WEE BOBBY WALKS TALL

By Craig MacKenzie

HE'S won championships and cups as a player and coach over five decades, been a national coach, dined with royalty and rubbed shoulders with Franz Beckenbauer, Kevin Keegan and Rod Stewart.

There's not much that Bobby McLachlan has not achieved in football and his passion and perspective continue to set him apart from his peers.

A competitive nature has been a trademark throughout his playing and coaching career. So has a sharp wit, a cheeky grin and a sense of humour. "When you get to my age you're just thankful when anyone wants to talk to you," he says.

And there's much to talk about. His playing CV includes spells at Scottish clubs Morton and Queen's Park and Australian outfits APIA, Lions (Melbourne), Slavia, Croatia (Melbourne), Box Hill, George Cross, Preston Makedonia and Brighton.

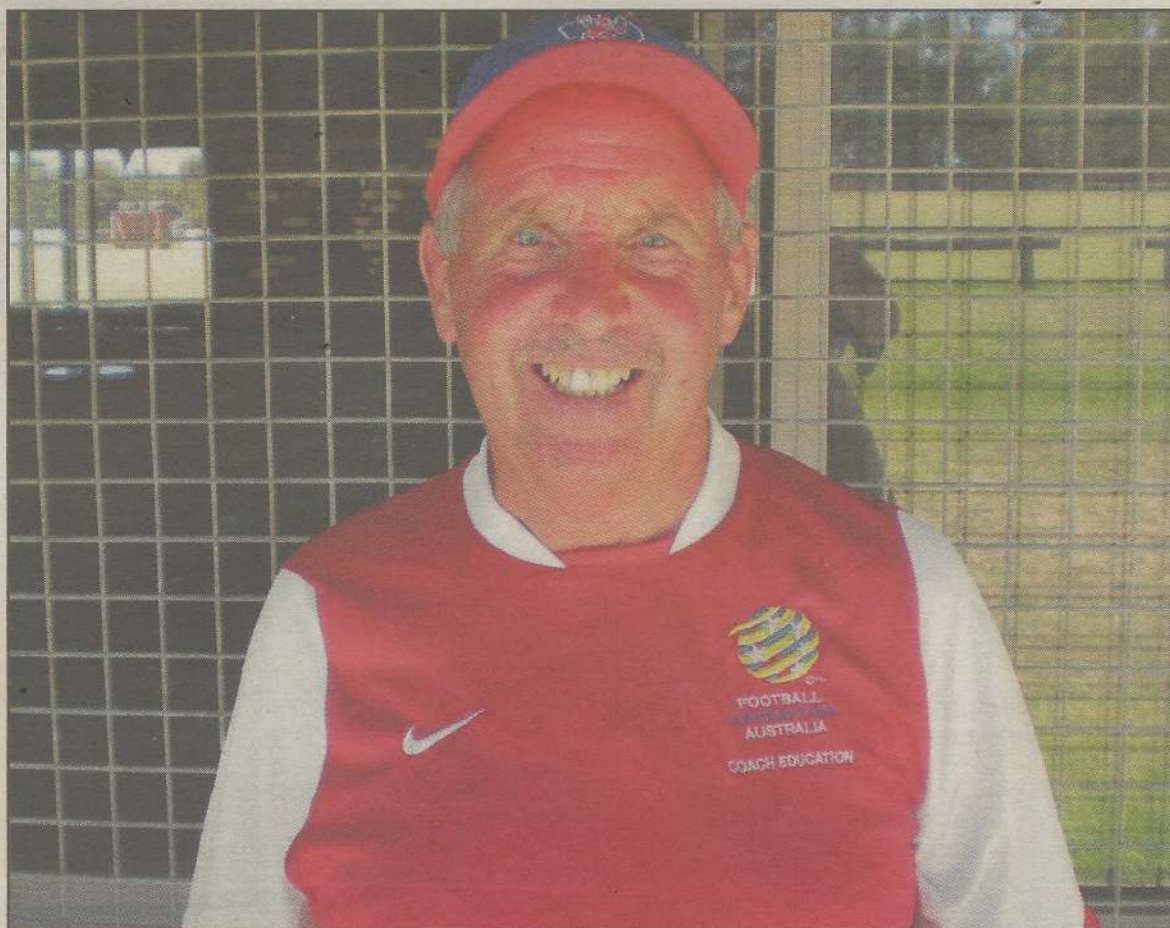
He twice broke his leg at Croatia. The first time is etched in his memory: "Back then a trainer was someone who you got to carry a bucket and a sponge and I remember the trainer coming onto the pitch, helping me to my feet, then putting his arm around me and telling me to stamp on my leg to see if it was okay."

His club coaching CV includes time at Preston, Sunshine, Juventus, Green Gully, Footscray JUST, Morwell Falcons, Fawkner and South Dandenong among others. He's also coached Brunei and the Fijian national team.

Best remembered for championships at Green Gully and Morwell and for taking the Gippsland-based Falcons into the old national league its his stint as coach of Brunei that evokes some of his most entertaining memories.

"Well, there was the time that the Sultan hired Rod Stewart to sing at Prince Billah's birthday party. You're in this room as one of 200 guests listening to Rod Stewart singing and you have to pinch yourself. But I think he might have had a bit to drink because he forgot the words to 'Maggie May'!"

"Then there was another time when Prince Billah picked a side to play against us ex-pats. We didn't take it too seriously and strolled onto the pitch with our beer bellies and won 3-0. The Prince took it bad and told us he'd arrange another game and we waited weeks for it then one day he gave us a date and time. We turned up to see this luxurious bus pull up and the first guy to step off it was Kevin Keegan. Then off comes Beresford, Peacock and Barton. Newcastle United had a break and half the side was



Langwarrin's new director of junior coaching, Bobby McLachlan.
Photo: JOHN HESKINS.

there. They beat us easily and after the match I asked Keegan what brought him and the others over here. He said: 'A nice little earner' and smiled."

McLachlan's link with the legendary Beckenbauer dates back to 1979 when New York Cosmos toured Australia. He accepted a request from the visitors for a practice match before their clash with Victoria and found himself ushering Beckenbauer, Giorgio Chinaglia, Vladislav Bogicevic, Carlos Alberto, Johan Neeskens and their celebrated teammates into the humble dressing rooms at Green Gully Reserve.

"That was hard to believe. It was even harder to believe when Paul Wade scored 17 minutes into the practice game and Gully was leading 1-0!"

Some years later at Morwell Falcons, headed by president Don di Fabrizio, the club was preparing to make its national league debut. McLachlan takes up the tale:

"I decided the Sunday before our first game against Sydney Olympic that we'd get the boys together and get a few things organised. I had my core team lining up against the leftovers but we didn't have enough for the leftovers. So one spectator went and got a pair of boots but they were still a man short. SBS was down covering the session and Kyle Patterson offered to play if we could get him a

pair of boots. That was arranged and we played the game. They beat us 1-0!

"So this was us preparing to face Olympic. On the Monday morning I got a phone call with this gruff German voice on the other end of the line. It was Les Scheinflug, who was coaching Blacktown at the time, telling me he had a striker for me. I asked him how much. He said: 'For you, it's free. Just get him as far away from me as possible!' It was Billy Wright he was talking about and Billy arrived on the Tuesday.

"So we were at home against Olympic a few days later and we just concentrated on getting players behind the ball and making it as hard for them as we could. Anyway, Billy scored in the 8th minute and later on young Zoran Markovski hit a screamer from about 40 yards and we ended up winning 2-0.

"I don't know what the Olympic people thought about it but they must have got a shock. Not just at the result because back then all the cars started peeping their horns when we won our first corner."

But don't for one minute think that McLachlan is all about the past and comic anecdotes. His serious side and present-day focus emerges when we play a name association game. The first name thrust at him is Frank Lowy.

"People held this game back for years. It was all about how many votes you could get but along comes Frank Lowy who didn't need any votes and suddenly the game is more professional than it's ever been.

"Having said that I think that (A-League) players and coaches are spoilt now with money and facilities. I've watched some of them and thought to myself 'I was important once too'.

"At times the standard is hard to take. I can compare players and eras unlike many of the youngsters that go to the Victory games now. One coach (Branko Culina) recently said that his team was shit. He can say that because he can compare."

The next name put before him is that of Soccerroo supremo Pim Verbeek.

"I don't know him but he comes across as so self-assured. He oozes self-belief and he's done very well. He's continued on from (Guus) Hiddink who was a godsend for this country. Local coaches didn't have the experience to go into a World Cup the way Hiddink did."

So what does he associate with the name Mark Rendell?

"Well, like Pim Verbeek, I don't really know him. What I do know is in that job (FFV CEO) it's you against the clubs and history tells us that they have a way of bringing you down to earth. Or just bringing you down."

And McLachlan's reaction to the

name of a long-time associate, legendary football photographer Les Shorrock?

"He was wonderful for the game. He really was. That's one of the things that's missing nowadays – the characters have gone out of the game. You pick up the paper and you see a column by a Victory player and you just know it's from either Kevin (Muscat) or Archie (Thompson). That's because they don't really have anyone else."

Next, what does he associate with the name Stuart Munro after spending a number of seasons with the ex-Rangers star at Oakleigh and Dandenong Thunder?

"I'm surprised that he's not been recognised in higher coaching circles. I've heard him at half-time and his evaluation of the game has been spot-on. I've watched his training sessions and they have been excellent. I know for a fact that he gets terrific respect from his players but like so many former pros he never pushes his name. You never hear him go on about his time at Rangers or in England. There are many inferior coaches out there who go around putting their names forward and getting some big jobs."

Finally, and appropriately given that McLachlan has recently been appointed director of junior coaching at Langwarrin, what are his thoughts when confronted by the name Gus Macleod?

"I tried to sign him for Juventus before I eventually got him to Gully (in 1981). I remember his first game for us. He actually tripped going onto the ground. He was a wee bit cumbersome and looked a bit portly. Back then Gully had a group of five supporters that we called the brain-trust. Well, they decided to call Gus 'The Horse' and try and give him a hard time. But that all ended when he scored two goals in the Ampol Cup Final and we beat Croydon who had made a few smart comments in the press. That was the match in which Gus ran over to their bench after scoring and grabbed their bucket of water and threw it over them.

"I think he probably came over too late in his playing career but when you look at his coaching career it's remarkable in today's day and age that anyone can be with the one club for so many years.

"And already I'm enjoying the environment down at Langwarrin. I love working with the youngsters. They seem to listen to me and they seem to like what I say and do.

"As I've got older I've come to better understand human nature. I'm much more comfortable with myself and I'm just happy to be involved in doing something that I've always loved."

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Hodgson sues Pines



By Craig MacKenzie

FORMER Frankston Pines senior coach Doug Hodgson is suing the club for over \$8000 plus additional costs and expenses.

Hodgson's solicitors served Pines with a formal claim in late August for monies allegedly owed during his 2008 coaching stint with the Monterey Reserve outfit.

Hodgson's claim covers an 18-week period from 22 April to 24 August in 2008.

The matter has been listed for hearing at Frankston Magistrate's Court on 18 January 2010.

Hodgson is a former Pines junior who went on to forge a successful professional career in England with Sheffield United and Oldham. He had loan stints with Plymouth Argyle, Burnley and Northampton Town.

He is a former Heidelberg United defender and also has coached the Greek-backed outfit.

Hodgson replaced Adam Jamieson partway through last year's Victorian Premier League season with Pines propping up the league ladder. The club was winless with just two points from nine games.

Pines picked up 15 points from the next 17 games which included some famous scalps, Green Gully and Oakleigh among them.

It still was not enough to lift the club off bottom spot.

Hodgson joined Premier League newcomer Dandenong Thunder for the 2009 season as assistant to former Rangers player Stuart Munro.

Hodgson has resigned from that position to spend more time with his family though GW believes that he has received a couple of coaching offers in the past week.



Flashback to 2008: Pines coach Doug Hodgson (centre), Matt Morris-Thomas (left) and Craig Metcalfe. Photo: DARRYL KENNEDY.



KAT'S CORNER

With Peter Katholos

Australian international with 25 caps, Australian Player of the Year, winner of 4 NSL championships, 3 NSL Cups, 557 first grade games, 97 goals from 1976-1996. Played for St George, Sydney Olympic, Apia, Marconi, Melita Eagles and Larissa (Greece). Rated as one of the best technically gifted players ever produced in Australia. Now involved with player development and player management. www.technikfootball.com

Best wishes for the coming season!

The topic I want to begin the season with is the burning issue of players with technique, skill and creativity.

I read the current FFA national curriculum about playing 4-3-3, how our players lack technical ability, how we produce good players with physical qualities and running strength but lacking in flair, creativity and finesse.

I was reading articles 16 years ago and everyone agreed on this issue at that time.

So what has changed?

The technical director of the FFA,

Hans Berger, has identified and agreed with what most of us in the game were saying back then!

Ok, we all agree, so how are we going to make it happen and produce world class footballers?

I read that the French Football Federation employs first division players with skill and technique to coach their elite youngsters, which most other top flight nations do to produce quality footballers.

In Australia who should we employ to coach our elite youngsters? The answer is staggeringly obvious.

We must enlist the services of former Socceroos who displayed great skill and technique during their playing days.

Oscar Crino, Alan Davidson, Peter Katholos, Con Boutsianis, Zarko Odzakovic, Washington Gonzalez, Raul Blanco, Milan Blagojevic, Gus Cerro, Paul Okon, Ante Juric, Pablo Cardozo Marshall Soper and Branko Milosevic are just a few of the many faces who could change the course of Australian football and produce true technical players.

Also, we must import coaches who can reinforce this skill, flair and technique at a senior level while producing teams with advanced tactical awareness.

After the correct people are employed to teach the young players, we must encourage the players at the elite levels to express themselves and take risks

in the right part of the field, not discourage them with tactical jargon!

Could you please read this again, "Not discourage them with tactical jargon."

I believe if players like Messi and Ronaldo had played in Australia they would never have made the grade because the coaches would have continually instructed them, "pass the ball you hog."

So Aussie football wake up!!

If we are serious about producing technical players and raising our standards we must employ the best technical coaches and not settle for anything less.

Mr. Berger please take note.



Peter Katholos appears on behalf of Technik Football



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BOO'S WORLD

With Mark Boric.



And so another season begins. Another off-season of A-League action, World Cup qualifying and local player and club upheaval has passed. So where does one begin?

No seriously, where does one begin? I've read through some old columns with a mind for commencing the new volume with a "Best of" piece, but the only two decent lines I found were not going to get me very far in that endeavour.

One of the best things about the off-season, if you have Foxtel (they used to sponsor the VPL you know), was the emergence of Matchday Saturday as must-see tv. The Gold Logie this year should go to Mark Bosnich's laugh. Robbie Slater can irritate some folk, but even they will get a kick out of him being belittled for Liverpool's sagging fortunes.

The paper is, as always, on the look out for valued sponsors and advertisers. I, as always, am also on the fund-seeking trail with two movie projects in mind. There is my previously mentioned Australian hooligan epic, which



The Hanson Brothers: Coming to an A-league screen near you! And you can forget about trying to sing the national anthem...

I'm hoping Nicole Kidman will now want to be a part of as she is involved

in the FFA's 2018/2022 World Cup bid. You would think the FFA would

see the positive benefits of producing our own The Football Factory/Green

Street Hooligans in that it would announce to the world that we have finally arrived as a serious footballing nation.

I'm also working on a script modifying the Paul Newman classic Slap Shot into an A-League franchise setting. It's coming along well, as, without trying to be too immodest, I really excel in the use of profane language. Something which I am sadly unable to demonstrate in this particular publication. I'd like to think it could shatter some of the records set by South Park: Bigger, Longer, Uncut in that department. Another positive is that Underbelly has shown us that there is no shortage of local actresses willing to get their assets out, which means all the ingredients for a great movie are within our reach.

Interesting to watch Sydney FC's biggest fan, Frank Lowy, celebrate with them in handing over the Premiers Plate after their win over Melbourne Victory last week. No evidence of bias there when it comes to possibly allowing a club to get away with salary cap cheating.



KRNCVIC'S CRUNCHLINES

With Eddie Krncevic

Australian soccer legend, Eddie Krncevic represented the Socceroos 35 times and scored 17 goals. He played professionally in Europe for Dinamo Zagreb (Croatia), MSV Duisberg (Germany), Mulhouse (France) and Anderlecht, FC Liege, Aalst and Charleroi in Belgium.

Welcome football fans to the first instalment of Krncevic's Crunchlines for season 2010. I hope you had a great Christmas and New Year and you're all ready for another smorgasbord of fantastic football ahead. It promises to be an exciting year, especially with the World Cup just around the corner, and I just can't wait for the kick-off to the biggest show on earth.

The 2010/11 season also promises to be a bumper year in the A-league when Melbourne Heart takes the stage, bringing fans a true 'local derby' featuring two clubs from the same city, when it gets the chance to strut its stuff against Melbourne Victory. Victory, of course, have lead the way in being model ambassadors for the code since the A-League's inception, helping to break down the barriers that once existed and opening the way for new football fans to embrace the game.

The prospect of the derby between Victory and Heart is mouth-watering to say the least; and something that up and coming players will be bursting to be part of. Perhaps one day it may even match the passion and prestige that a AC Milan v Inter derby brings to Italy, or Flamengo v Fluminense match in Brazil. Whatever the case, I'm sure it will bring more colour and excitement to the A-league table as the competition goes from strength to strength.

There's no doubt in my mind that huge crowds will turn out for this affair and even though the Victory must be credited for the tremendous job it has done in putting football on the map in Victoria, I also believe there is probably a great deal of football followers that having been following the game from afar, and for one reason or another have chosen not to align themselves with Victory and attend their matches.

The Heart will at least provide the alternative avenue for those fans to come out of the woodwork, and the derby will be the spice that will feed the fire in the bellies of football fans and players alike. I can't wait to hear the roar and see the crowds when they come together as one, in that magnificent new purpose built football stadium that all Victorian football fans will at long last be able to call home. For those of us who have been in the game for a long time, this is a dream come true.

One thing the Victory has done extremely well since formation is that it has maintained consistency



An exciting year ahead awaits football fans. The World Cup and a Victorian derby are just a couple of things to look forward to. Boat shops are in for a bumper year of trade also....

with most of it playing roster. Unfortunately, I think that some clubs in the A-League have been forced to adjust their playing personnel way too frequently, and the consequence of that is that the 'new football' fan has struggled to accept and understand the notion. Too often we've seen players swap clubs too easily, making a mockery of club loyalty and in turn being detrimental to the establishment of the clubs and the competition.

Sporting fans, especially the young ones, want to be able to identify and relate with their heroes wearing their colours, and I believe that is one aspect of the competition why some fans have already second questioned why they should continue to turn out and support their clubs via the turnstiles. The majority of the Australian sporting public are more accustomed to AFL and rugby players predominately staying with one club during their careers, and are probably not used to the high turnover of player transfers that occur regularly in the round ball game - which may well in fact creates a thinking of contempt in the terraces.

The Victory can probably thank the continued presence of Ernie Merrick, Kevin Muscat and Archie Thompson for providing their fans with that trust element and identification factor that may be leaving fans feeling short changed at other clubs. Of course, one can say that Steve Corica has done the same for Sydney FC, and Travis Dodd for Adelaide United, but what about the plethora of other players who have graced the A-League and then left to pursue their careers in Asia and Europe at the drop of a hat when the opportunity arises? Sash Ognenovski, Joel Griffiths and Daniel Allsopp, to name but a few, immediately come to mind.

No doubt, the A-League clubs are stuck between a rock and a hard place in trying to hang on to their players, and until the competition reaches a stage where players are content to ply their trade in Australia, the young ones with stars in their eyes, and the older ones with financial carrots dangling in front of them will always be tempted to leave these shores and chase their dreams overseas. Only until the competition grows stronger, we have success in Asia, and the money is as competitive as what is offered abroad, will our clubs be able to hang on to their players and build a strong relationship between them and the fan base. We have come a long way,

but there is still plenty of work yet to be done.

Ian Gray

Along with the rest of the Australian football family I was shocked and saddened by the news of the death of former Socceroo, Ian Gray. He was a real personality of the game, as passionate about the game as anyone you will ever meet, and although we actually didn't play together, we spent a lot of time together at the Marconi Club when I spent time in Australia during breaks from playing overseas. No one deserves to go like that, and my sincerest condolences go out to the Gray family. We must thank him for all that he offered Australian football.

VPL Kicks Off

The Victorian Premier League kicks off this weekend, and I can't wait for it to get started. First game off the rank is the big clash between Oakleigh Cannons and the newly promoted Bentleigh Greens at Jack's Place. It promises to be a cracking game think we're in for a very interesting season. I would like to wish all the teams the very best luck for the season ahead. Let the games begin!



Former Socceroo, Ian Gray, in action for Marconi

NSW prepares for kick-off

By Mike Salter

THE 2010 NSW Premier League begins next weekend, and with four different champions in the last four years, predicting a winner is a tough ask.

Yet there is no doubt as to which club has made the biggest waves in the off-season. The Bonnyrigg White Eagles, perhaps piqued by the recent success of their eternal rivals Sydney United, have gone on a spending spree as prolonged as it has been ambitious. Pocket dynamo Shane Webb and free kick specialist Daniel Severino have arrived from Bankstown City, and the Serbian-backed club has also snared the services of experienced midfielder Vuko Tomasevic, and former Sydney FC defender Wade Oostendorp. Perhaps most importantly of all, Sutherland's star marksman Brad Boardman has moved to Bonnyrigg after a very prolific couple of years with the defending champions.

Coach Brian Brown, also once of Sutherland, will be expected to deliver some silverware to the Serbian Centre this season, but he will face some stiff competition, not least from his rivals across Elizabeth Drive. Sydney United, after a period of rejuvenation under rookie coach Ante Milicic, will be under the command of another coaching novice this season in former Socceroo and Sydney FC striker David Zdrilic. Milicic has moved south to be part of new A-League franchise Melbourne Heart.

The Edensor Park faithful can again look forward to plenty of goals from the forward partnership of Luka Glavas and Elsid Barkhousir, while key midfielder Peter Markovic is back from injury and expected to play a

major role. Amongst the new acquisitions are former Sutherland and APIA winger Shane Lyons, veteran midfielder Peter Zorbas, who left Sydney Olympic in contentious circumstances last season, and highly-rated youngster Sean Mitchell.

Olympic are to be respected as always, but the new acquisitions do not quite set the pulse racing. Ex-Central Coast Mariners midfielder Andre Gumprecht failed to impress on his last NSWPL sojourn, and the fans are somewhat divided on his arrival. Midfielders Tayfun Devrimol and Phil Makrys are both experienced at this level, but neither hit any great heights in 2009. There have been rumours of a truly big signing in the shape of former Bolton midfielder Stelios Giannakopoulos, but rumour is all that has surfaced as yet.

Defending champions Sutherland may find it tough to defend their crown. Losing Boardman is a body-blow, and with promising midfield link-man Panny Nikas off to the A-League and lively young striker Matthew Hall joining Marconi, the men from the south look less threatening this time around, despite the arrival of ex-Sydney FC man Ben Vidaic. Yet they will be hard to beat at their Seymour Shaw stronghold as usual.

There have been few changes at Bankstown City. Tall striker Almir Dizdagic has arrived from Bonnyrigg, but the Macedonian-backed club will again rely very heavily on the subtle skills and bursts of pace provided by their Lebanese international Hussein Salameh, who had an outstanding season in 2009. The defence, however, is starting to look a little on the geriatric side.

APIA were very disappointing last season, and although star goalkeeper Matthew Nash has returned to Leichhardt this season, the squad looks less than threatening. They will be looking for much more from former Liverpool and Perth Glory winger Nick Rizzo this season, and elegant striker Franco Parisi will need to be on top form if the Italian-backed club is to make the finals.

After a grim couple of years, things are looking up for Blacktown City. Aytsek Genc, who had such success with the club before an ill-fated move to Sydney FC and a disastrous spell in charge of Olympic, has returned to the coach's chair. Burly striker Luke Roodenburg has also returned after a period spent overseas, while the turf at the re-named Lily Homes stadium is also familiar to winger Adam Biddle and sturdy defender Mirko Jurilj, who have both moved back to Blacktown from Olympic.

Marconi's foreign legion proved a hit last season, and they have retained the services of mercurial Ivorian winger Ousmane Toure for 2010, although Iraqi star Ali Abbas has stepped up to the A-League. Inspirational captain Nahuel Arrarte has also re-signed, as has most of last season's exciting young side. The men from Bossley Park will pose a serious threat once more.

We can expect more of the same from the tough, well-drilled Manly United outfit this season. They have lost their experienced defensive pairing of Matt Bingley and Spencer Prior, but the return of 'classy' centre-back Pascal Julliard will go some way towards offsetting the loss. The rest of the squad is mostly unchanged, and Phil Moss's



Shark attack!! Sutherland players are jubilant after winning the Telechoice NSW Premier League in 2009.
PHOTO: COURTESY FNSW

men will be competitive as always. The other three sides in the competition are unlikely to reach the finals. The West Sydney Berries finished last season strongly, but still look short of quality and depth. The South Coast Wolves, formerly Wollongong FC, have not been able to recruit ambi-

tiously and will struggle to make much of an impact. Lastly, competition new boys Rockdale City have a squad made up mainly of former Super League players plus a few cast-offs from Premier League clubs, and may find the challenge of the NSWPL a little too much for them.

Tasmania

goalweekly.com

South Hobart on verge of Summer Final

By Walter Pless

SOUTH Hobart took a huge step towards qualifying for the southern Tasmanian Summer Cup final when they easily accounted for Olympia Warriors 4-0 at South Hobart on Saturday.

The win followed South Hobart's 1-0 win over Tilford Zebras the previous weekend on the opening day of the tournament.

South Hobart are on top of the four-team Group A after two games.

Olympia were no match for a clinical South Hobart, which led 2-0 at half-time through goals by Kostas Kanakaris in the 19th minute and Liam Scott in the 26th minute.

Jonathon Lo, who returned to the club this year after a season on the north-west coast with Somerset, scored twice in the second half to complete the rout.

Kanakaris had scored the only goal in South Hobart's win over Tilford Zebras the previous weekend.

New Town Eagles are second in Group A after drawing 1-1 with Olympia on the opening weekend and winning the subsequent penalty shoot-out 5-4.

Adam McKeown opened Eagles' account in the 9th minute following Jamie Vernon's right-wing cross and poor defending by Olympia, while Dipendra

Kunwar equalised in the 13th minute.

In the penalty shoot-out, Andy Clark, Shane Kent, Alex Leszczynski and Josh Hadfield were successful for Eagles, while Emmanuel Tsakiris, Aaron Smith-Richardson and Kunwar betted for Olympia.

Eagles' McKeown blazed over the bar, and Olympia's Dmitri Nester hit the post and Ben Phillips had his effort saved by Eagles goalkeeper Nathan Pitchford.

Pitchford injured his right shoulder in the shoot-out and will miss the remainder of the tournament.

Olympia are third after two games and Tilford Zebras, the holders of the trophy, are last but have played just one game.

In Group B, Kingborough Lions United lost their opening match 2-1 to Clarence United, last year's losing finalists.

Goals by Luke Cripps in the 20th minute and Luke Huigsloot in the 23rd minute gave Clarence a 2-0 lead, but Greg Freeman pulled a goal back for the Lions three minutes from the end.

Kingborough beat bottom-side Taroona 1-0 on Saturday in their second match and join Clarence and Glenorchy Knights at the top of the group, each side having three points.

The goal sneak Greg Freeman naturally poached the goal, this time after just six minutes.

Taroona, newly promoted to the top flight this season are struggling.

They also lost their opening game 3-0 to Glenorchy Knights, who have Melbourne Knights midfielder James Sherman in their ranks.

Sherman opened the scoring against Taroona with a 30-metre free-kick, while Jacob Huigsloot volleyed the second following a corner by Danny White, the former Green Gully Cavaliers and Whittlesea Zebras player.

White scored the third, prodding home Will Roberts's left-wing cross from close range.

The northern Tasmanian pre-season tournament, the Steve Hudson Cup, commenced last weekend in Launceston and southern clubs South Hobart and Taroona are also participating.

This means that both clubs play in the southern tournament on Saturdays and then travel the 200 kilometres to Launceston on Sundays to play for the second time each weekend.

In the opening round, Ulverstone beat Northern Rangers 3-0, Launceston City defeated Western Knights 1-0, South Hobart overcame Riverside Olympic 5-1 and Taroona downed Launceston United 6-0.

In Sunday's matches, Hobart Zebras overcame Group A rival New Town Eagles 2-0 through goals from Ricky Self and Dwayne Walsh, while Glenorchy Knights narrowly defeated Clarence United 1-0 through an Alex Holmes header in their Group B encounter.



Kingborough's Marc Iseli (left) prepares to tackle Taroona's Sam Johnson as referee Ian Colhoun looks on.
PHOTO BY WALTER PLESS

Sydney breaks Brisbane dominance



SFC creates history after becoming the first Australian club to capture both the men's and women's domestic titles. PHOTO BY GEOFF JONES

By Russ Gibbs

Sydney FC proved that Brisbane Roar were human after all dismissing the reigning champions and hot favorites for a second successive title by a far more comfortable margin than the final score of 3-2 may indicate in the Westfield W-League Grand Final. The sky blues were the stronger team all over the field in the W-League showdown and thoroughly deserved their first crown. The final capped a terrific second season of the fledgling competition and hopes are high for an even more competitive third edition. So, how did the teams fare in 2009?

Sydney FC

Final League Position: 1st (Champions)

Top Scorer: Sarah Walsh, Leena Khamis (8 goals)

Quite simply the best team in the league as demonstrated in a highly effective Grand Final performance against the Roar. Led by the goals of Sarah Walsh and Leena Khamis (the pair managed eight each during the year) Sydney were a dominant force. Highly influential was the midfield triumvirate of skipper Heather Garriock and the imported Danish internationals Julie Rydahl and Cathrin Paaske. Indeed, the dead ball prowess of Rydahl was noticeable in both the semi-final victory over Canberra United and the Grand Final. Unsung, perhaps, but of equal importance was the contribution of teen-star Linda O'Neill. O'Neill's tireless running and high energy were a huge boon to Sydney and the midfielder/full-back was well worth her goal in the final. With careful recruitment and retention of star names Sydney FC, under the guidance of Allen Stajic, will be tough to back against again next time round.

Central Coast Mariners
Final League Position: 2nd

Top Scorer: Michelle Heyman (11 goals)

It was a wonderful season from the Central Coast Mariners, but ultimately one of what might have been. Top of the ladder heading into the last round fixture with Sydney defeat in the championship showdown was followed by the agony of a narrow loss to Brisbane Roar in the semi-finals. A major revelation of the season however was the form of striker Michelle Heyman. Eleven goals saw the tall attacker claim the Golden Boot and the award of Westfield W-League 'Player of the Year'. The Mariners slick attacking style was made possible by the silky skills of Kelly Golebiowski out wide and the influence of their United States imports. Kendall Fletcher and Lydia Vandenbergh excelled but the performances of Jillian Loyden were astonishing earning her the 'Goalkeeper of the Year' award. Masterminding all this was likeable coach Stephen Roche, a worthy recipient of the 'Coach of the Year' alongside Canberra's Ray Junna. Should they retain their American stars for 2010 the Mariners will have plenty of backing.

Brisbane Roar

Final League Position: 3rd

Top Scorer: Tameka Butt (6 goals)

For the first time in the two years of the Westfield W-League the Roar looked shaky. Head Coach Jeff Hopkins still had stacks of international experience to call upon and, on paper at least, had arguably the strongest squad in the competition. And, for long stretches of the campaign, their form was red-hot. Then came some inexplicable results in the shape of a loss to Perth Glory and a scarcely believable 2-2 draw with lowly Adelaide United. Ultimately the dropping of five points in these matches was to prove crucial to their final league placing. However, few would have foreseen the touch-up they received in the Grand Final from Sydney. Perhaps the jiggling of the team to keep the myriad of stars happy had a knock-on effect but the Roar will surely

come bouncing back in 2010. Rumours of a mass exodus of players to a mooted Gold Coast United team have yet to come to fruition but, if it does happen, the Roar have enough depth to cope. Goalkeeper Casey Dumont once more underlined her credentials as a Matildas international 'keeper in waiting with a string of excellent saves whilst joint 'Young Player of the Year' Elise Kellond-Knight continues to flourish.

Canberra United

Final League Position: 4th

Top Scorer: Ellie Brush, Shu O Tseng (4 goals)

Having lost the experienced heads that saw the team make the Grand Final in the first season of the Westfield W-League Canberra could have been forgiven for using 2009 as a rebuilding phase. However, under astute new coach Ray Junna, joint 'Coach of the Year', United flourished in the latter part of the campaign only to bow out meekly to a ten-player Sydney FC in the semi-final. New signing, and dual football-cricket international, Ellyse Perry was outstanding. Not content with sweeping the board at the club's internal awards ceremony the 19-year-old was named joint Westfield 'Young Player of the Year.' Another new signing, Emily Van Egmond, showed glimpses of her potential and Co-Captain Ellie Brush was as forceful as ever, even managing to become a real menace at set pieces with four goals. United also became the first W-League club to import Asian players with the introduction of Chinese Taipei internationals Chiung Ying Lin and Shu O Tseng, the latter with her purple hair, becoming a McKellar Park cut hero. Expect more from Junna's emerging squad next term.

Melbourne Victory

Final League Position: 5th

Top Scorer: Katrina Gorrie, Katie Thorlaksson (2 goals)

A severe lack of goals was the major disadvantage for Melbourne in 2009

with the Victoria based outfit struggling in that regard, netting only nine times throughout the season. The emergence of wide player Katrina Gorrie as a constant threat was a bonus for the Victory as was the almost watertight defence that conceded only ten goals in as many games, not surprising when you consider they were marshaled by Melissa Barbieri in goal and the giant centre-back pairing of Laura Alleway and Maika Ruyter-Hooley. The Victory desperately needs a noted goalscorer though to help bolster their attacking ranks if they are to be seen as a genuine title threat in W-League season three. A lean season in front of the net saw Gorrie and Katie Thorlaksson the leading scorers with two apiece. A six or seven goal-a-season player will be Coach Matt Shepherd's target during the off-season with the addition of a creative midfielder also required.

Perth Glory

Final League Position: 6th

Top Scorer: Katie Gill (3 goals)

Perth looked much better towards the tail end of the season particularly when the returning Katie Gill was partnered with 'Rising Star' award winner Sam Kerr in an exciting attacking duo. The absence of Lisa De Vanna from the starting line-up on a number of occasions was a surprise suggesting that the talented Australian striker may be on the move come next season. However, it was a De Vanna goal that finally ended any chance that Melbourne had of a play off place in the final game of the season. The absence of experienced campaigner Collette McCallum through injury hindered the squad as well and a lack of goals, despite the undoubted quality of De Vanna and Kerr was a headache. Should the Glory manage to harness the skills of their most important players in tandem for 2010 then they could push for a finals place.

Adelaide United

Final League Position: 7th

Top Scorer: Rachael Quigley (5

goals)

A season to forget for the South Australians which saw them score only three points from the season on the back of a hat-trick of draws. On a positive note a 2-2 draw with the seemingly invincible Brisbane Roar would have been well-received amongst Coach Michael Barnett and his team. Shorn of most of their international players from 2009 the Adelaide squad was, like Canberra, based mainly on youth. The vibrant performances of leading scorer Rachael Quigley was a bonus as was the reliability of Donna Cockayne and Georgia Chapman. The concession of thirty-one league goals, the worst in the competition, will not have pleased former Young Matildas shot-stopper Sian McLaren who will undoubtedly be keen to make amends next season. With the players being a year older and better for the experiences gained in 2009, Westfield W-League season three should see a more solid Adelaide outfit take to the field.

Newcastle Jets

Final League Position: 8th

Top Scorer: Tara Andrews, Renee Cartwright (2 goals)

As with Adelaide United, the Jets will probably want to draw a line under the 2009 season and file it under 'work in progress' as the Novocastrians struggled for consistency throughout the year. A lack of real strike power certainly came back to haunt them as the seven goals scored was a league low along with Adelaide. More will be expected of Australian internationals Hayley Crawford and Amber Neilsen in 2010 and the progression of young Tara Andrews, a striker of frightening potential will be interesting to follow. Her development could provide the answers to the Jets goal scoring issues. Discipline will need to be tightened up in 2010 as well as fourteen yellow cards and two reds was a large tally in a, mostly, card-free league and a problem that Coach Wayne O'Sullivan will try to address.

COPA LIBERTADORES BEGINS

By Francis Fields

PLENTY of drama unfolded across the summer season festivities in the Latin American continent with off-the-pitch from unfortunate road accidents, the shooting in the head of a key international forward, the unsettled transitions many clubs have gone through for instance in Mexico and Argentina while still with Mexico, a few headaches with their administration and CONMEBOL, South America's FA with its premier continental club competition, the Copa Libertadores.

Football media around the world have covered the dreadful shooting in a Mexico City nightclub of Salvador Cabañas, Club America's goalscoring machine received a gun-shot to his head and left fighting for his life. The Paraguayan international while gaining consciousness after three days initially under intensive care and medical observation spoke to his wife and said of only committed words to fight back and kick a ball once again. He is not expected to return to the beautiful game, a tragic loss for this year's World Cup, not to mention for his club while he was sparking interest of late with Steve Bruce at Sunderland in the Premier League. Under a cerebral edema, the accumulation of fluid in his brain is starting to retreat however recovery remains delicate.



It will take more than guns to keep Salvador Cabañas down...

Over to Buenos Aires, this summer was overshadowed by the fatal car accident on a freeway involving River Plate midfielder and young gun Diego Buonanotte while behind the wheel. When waking up from consciousness, he found out while behind the wheel that his long-time friends were instantly killed at the scene of the event. He too is expected to be out of action however for season 2010-11.

The core question that raises eye-brows surely entails the professionalism and societal role football players command and attached themselves onto.

Buonanotte's club River Plate moved on and commenced their 2010 season with the Torneo de Verano annually played at the seaside city of Mar del Plata, Salta and Mendoza with some energising football played. As usual, the Boca Juniors-River Plate derby or clasico was the highlight in their separate Copa Revancha and Copa Desafío (Revenge and Challenge cups respectively) with the team from La Boca taking the honours under new coach Abel Alves while their nemesis River Plate are also under an old face in Leonardo Astrada with the reigns as Nestor Gorosito resigned to take the helm at struggling La Liga club Xerez CD.

Transfers were far and between with some big names leaving Argentina by the Christmas break onto Serie A like Rodrigo Palacio from Boca Juniors to Genoa and Colombian Fabian Vargas to Almeria in Spain also from Boca, Javier Pastore making a name for himself in Palermo as well from Huracan where he was on loan two big Brazilian names have returned home: Roberto Carlos from Fenerbahce in Turkey to Corinthians in his hometown of Sao Paulo, a stark note considering his started his career from notably before his time in Europe at Palmeiras, their cross-city rivals where he joins the mighty Ronaldo meanwhile Robinho from Manchester City has opted a return on loan to his beloved Santos with an heroic reception descending from a helicopter to greet his fans at the Vila Belmiro stadium where once Pele crowned himself as number ten hoping to keep himself match-fit in time for selection under Dunga for the Brazilian national team for South Africa's World Cup this June.

Onto the Libertadores in full-swing, the qualifying rounds are completed while the group stages are partly underway. Matchdays have been spared to allow certain groups to commence before others in a way to coordinate with the respective domestic league schedules to fit in as this year's World Cup in South Africa in June squeezes all official competitions earlier from late January into

February. Mexico's clubs are taking part again in a top class, traditional competition, while TV money for the South Americans is boosted by the exposure to the massive Mexican market.

A peace formula as well as a result of the most uncanny of situations where Chivas of Guadalajara and San Luis would be reinstated in this year's version of the Libertadores - at the stage where they pulled out in 2009 due to widespread insecurity of the Swine flu epidemic.

So the group phase kicked off early February but the Mexican pair don't have to go through it. They are already through to the second stage as this means that the group phase of the 2010 Libertadores will be the most competitive in the 51 versions of the competition.

Twenty teams went in to it, just five were eliminated and the other 15 joined the holders in the knock out rounds. Then, a decade ago, the competition was expanded, with 32 teams chasing 16 slots.

This year, because of the automatic qualification of Chivas and San Luis, there are only 14 slots available - and coming second in the group will not guarantee one of them. Only the eight group winners and the six best runners up will make the cut.

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The first stage results were as follows:

Deportivo Tachira Venezuela v Paraguay Libertad 1-0	1-3
Juan Aurich Peru v Mexico Estudiantes Tecos 2-0	2-1
Colón Argentina v Chile Universidad Católica 3-2	2-3
Real Potosí Bolivia v Brazil Cruzeiro 1-1	0-7
Newell's Old Boys Argentina v Ecuador Emelec 0-0	1-2
Junior Colombia v Uruguay Racing 2-2	0-2

Leading to the second round grouping:

Group 1	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Independiente Medellín COL	1	0	1	1	0	1		1
Cerro Porteño PAR	1	0	1	1	0	1		1
Corinthians BRA	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Racing URU	0	0	0	0	0	0		0

February 11, 2010
Cerro Porteño Paraguay 1-1 Colombia Independiente Medellín
Estadio Defensores del Chaco, Asunción
Referee: Saul Laveneri (Argentina)
Ramírez Goal 56' Report Pardo Goal 17'

February 24, 2010
Corinthians Brazil v Uruguay Racing
Estádio Municipal Paulo Machado de Carvalho (Pacaembu), São Paulo

Group 2	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Once Caldas COL	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3	
São Paulo BRA	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3	
Monterrey MEX	1	0	0	2	0	-2	0	
Nacional PAR	1	0	0	2	0	-2	0	

February 9, 2010
Nacional Paraguay 0-2 Colombia Once Caldas
Estadio Defensores del Chaco, Asunción
Referee: Federico Belligoy (Argentina)
Report Castrillon Goal 23' Santoya Goal 65'

February 10, 2010
São Paulo Brazil 2-0 Mexico Monterrey
Estadio Ciro Pompeu de Toledo (Morumbi), São Paulo Att: 35,523
Referee: Sergio Pezzotta (Argentina) Washington Goal 13', 76'

Group 3	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Allianza Lima PER	2	0	0	7	2	+5	6	
Estudiantes ARG	2	0	1	6	5	+1	3	
Bolívar BOL	1	0	0	1	1	3	-2	0
Juan Aurich PER	1	0	0	1	1	5	-4	0

February 10, 2010
Bolívar Bolivia 1-3 Peru Allianza Lima
Estadio Hernando Siles, La Paz Attendance: 25,000
Referee: Samuel Haro (Ecuador)
Ferreira Goal 89' (pen.) Report Fernández Goal 73', 74'
Montaña Goal 90+1'

February 11, 2010
Estudiantes Argentina 5-1 Peru Juan Aurich
Estadio Centenario, Quilmes
Attendance: 20,000
Referee: Salvo Fagundes (Brazil)
Boselli Goal 6' (pen.), 59', 72'
Rá Goal 43'
González Goal 89' Report Tejeda Goal 34'

February 18, 2010
Allianza Lima Peru 4-1 Argentina Estudiantes
Estadio Alejandro Villanueva, Lima Att: 30,000
Referee: Marlon Escalante (Venezuela)
Aguirre Goal 18', 34', 74' Fernández Goal 84' Report Sosa Goal 1'
February 24, 2010

Group 4	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Libertad PAR	2	0	0	6	0	+6	6	
Universitario PER	2	0	0	4	1	+3	6	
Lanús ARG	2	0	0	4	0	-4	0	
Blooming BOL	2	0	0	2	1	-6	0	

February 9, 2010

Lanús Argentina 0-2 Paraguay Libertad
Estadio Ciudad de Lanús - Néstor Díaz Pérez, Lanús Att: 10,000
Referee: Wilson Seneme (Brazil)
Report Gamarra Goal 67' Velázquez Goal 73'

February 11, 2010
Blooming Bolivia 1-2 Peru Universitario

Estadio Ramón "Tahuichi" Aguilera, Santa Cruz
Attendance: 15,000
Referee: Julio Quintana (Paraguay)
Gómez Goal 89' Orejuela Goal 52'
Espinoza Goal 76'

February 16, 2010
Libertad Paraguay 4-0 Bolivia Blooming
Estadio Defensores del Chaco, Asunción Att: 3,000
Referee: Roberto Silveira (Uruguay)
Cáceres Goal 45' Gamarra Goal 68', 90+1' Ayala Goal 90'

February 17, 2010
Universitario Peru 2-0 Argentina Lanús
Estadio Monumental, Lima Att: 25,000
Referee: Juan Soto (Venezuela)
Alva Goal 18' Labarthe Goal 88'

Group 5	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Cerro URU	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3	
Internacional BRA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Emelec ECU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Deportivo Quito ECU	1	0	0	1	0	-2	0	

February 9, 2010
Cerro Uruguay 2-0 Ecuador Deportivo Quito
Estadio Centenario, Montevideo Attendance: 7,500
Referee: Jorge Luis Osorio (Chile)
Dado Goal 19' Mora Goal 62' Report

Group 6	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Banfield ARG	2	0	0	6	2	+4	6	
Nacional URU	1	0	0	3	2	+1	3	
Morelia MEX	1	0	0	1	2	-1	0	
Deportivo Cuenca ECU	2	0	0	3	7	-4	0	

February 10, 2010
Banfield Argentina 2-1 Mexico Morelia
Estadio Florencio Sola, Banfield Attendance: 15,000
Referee: Javier Arias (Argentina)
Rodríguez Goal 55' Batión Goal 79' Roy Goal 90'

February 11, 2010
Nacional Uruguay 3-2 Ecuador Deportivo Cuenca Estadio Gran
Parque Central, Montevideo Attendance: 20,000 Referee: Enrique Osses
(Chile)
Reguero Goal 46', 65'
Morales Goal 85' (pen.) Report Granada Goal 25'
Escalada Goal 67'

February 17, 2010
Deportivo Cuenca Ecuador 1-4 Argentina Banfield
Estadio Alejandro Serrano Aguilar, Cuenca Att: 15,000
Referee: Wilmar Roldán (Colombia)
Méndez Goal 88' (pen.) Report Erviti Goal 35'
Fernández Goal 38', 60' Rodríguez Goal 71'

Group 7	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Vélez Sarsfield ARG	1	1	0	0	2	0	+2	3
Colo-Colo CHI	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Deportivo Italia VEN	1	0	0	1	0	-1	0	
Cruzeiro BRA	1	0	0	1	0	-2	0	

February 10, 2010
Vélez Sarsfield Argentina 2-0 Brazil Cruzeiro
Estadio José Amalfitani, Buenos Aires Attendance: 14,000
Referee: Martín Vázquez (Uruguay)
Silva Goal 5' Martínez Goal 77'

February 16, 2010
Colo-Colo Chile 1-0 Venezuela Deportivo Italia
Estadio Monumental, Santiago Attendance: 20,000
Referee: Victor Hugo Cantillo (Peru) Paredes Goal 58'

Group 8	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts
Universidad de Chile CHI	1	1	0	0	1	0	+1	3
Flamengo BRA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Universidad Católica CHI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Caracas VEN	1	0	0	1	0	-1	0	

February 18, 2010
Universidad de Chile Chile 1-0 Venezuela Caracas
Estadio Sausalito, Viña del Mar Attendance: 18,000
Referee: Georges Buckley (Paru)

TOFFEES STICK IT TO MAN U

Goal! Weekly's been out of action for the off-season but the European leagues have been kicking on. Julius Ross checks out the developments.



ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea is back in the box seat atop the Premier

League table, after closest rivals Manchester United slipped up against Everton and the Londoners saw off Wolverhampton Wanderers.

A Didier Drogba double did the damage for the Blues at Molineux, with the 2-0 victory handing Chelsea a four-point lead over second-placed United.

United grabbed an early lead at Goodison Park through Dimitar Berbatov in the 16th minute, but United fell apart thereafter.

Just three minutes later, the Toffees' Russian midfielder Diniyar Bilyaletdinov smashed a sizzling effort past United's 'keeper Edwin van der Sar who was caught flat-footed by the powerful effort.

Bilyaletdinov made way for Dan Gosling in the second half, and David Moyes' change was rewarded with 14 minutes remaining, Gosling knocking in a Steven Pienaar cross to turn the match on its head at 2-1.

Pienaar was subbed for Jack Rodwell with two minutes remaining and the 18-year old, who was heavily linked to a switch to United, clinically finished a Mikel Arteta through-ball at the death, leaving Sir Alex Ferguson's side with a bitter pill to swallow.

Everton has proved a headache for title contenders this season; 10 days earlier they shocked Chelsea 2-1 and the Londoners will be content they dealt United the same treatment.

Arsenal took advantage of United's mishap courtesy of a 2-0 defeat of Sunderland.

Both sides missed a host of chances at the Emirates, but Arsenal was thankful that Niklas Bendtner's strike on 27 minutes from close range found the net from the host of chances.

But the 1-0 score line did little to quell the home team's nerves and the Gunners had to wait until the final minutes when Fraizer Campbell brought down Cesc Fabregas in the box with the Span-



Jamie Rodwell and Phil Neville share the love after Manchester United became unstuck at Goodison Park.

iard converting the resulting spot-kick to make it 2-0.

Arsenal are now just two points adrift of United and trail Chelsea by six, but Arsene Wenger's men appear to have a more favourable fixture list heading into the final 12 games of the season than their rivals.

In contrast, Sunderland continued its woeful run of form which has seen it collect just three points from a possible 18 in the last six matches. They are just three points from the drop zone.

Hull City is in a similar predicament to the Black Cats after West Ham demolished them 3-0 at Upton Park.

The Tigers are entrenched in the relegation dog-fight, sitting just one point clear of third and second-last Bolton and Burnley, who have two games in hand over Phil Brown's men.

The Hammers made the Tiger's task difficult from as early as the third minute, when Valon Behrami opened the scoring and Hull's nightmare day continued with the dismissal of Craig Fagan for a second yellow.

Carlton Cole made it 2-0 just before the hour mark, and Julien Faubert added the final in the dying minutes to help the Hammers move four points clear of the relegation zone.

Portsmouth's off-field concerns were compounded by their on-field troubles, as they lost 2-1 to Stoke City at Fratton Park.

Stoke rubbed salt into tender Pompey wounds, with Salif Diao netting the winner in injury time.

Frederic Piquionne gave Portsmouth the lead, and a glimmer of hope, on 35 minutes, but Robert Huth cancelled out their advantage with a header, before Diao, who had not scored in the Premier League for eight years, knocked in the winner from a Ricardo Fuller cross.

While Pompey are rooted to the bottom of the Premier League table with a measly 16 points, attention will be transfixed this week on whether the club can emerge from their adverse financial situation.



SPAIN

Barcelona's Thierry Henry made the most of fellow striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic's

ankle injury, taking advantage of a rare starting berth to illustrate he still has that goal scoring touch, without the use of his hand.

Henry watched the previous three matches from the comfort of the bench, however, when Ibrahimovic was deemed unavailable for Barca's clash with Racing Santander, the Frenchman netted a free-kick in the 29th minute to help his side to a 4-0 rout.

Andres Iniesta had opened the scoring at the Nou Camp before Henry made it 2-0, while defender Rafael Marquez also illustrated his set piece ability with a sublime curling free kick in the 34th minute.

Thiago scored the fourth for Barcelona, to ensure the side bounced back from their first defeat of the season last week-

end against Atletico Madrid.

Pep Guardiola's side remain five points clear of Real Madrid on the Primera Liga table, who had the chance to close the gap to two points when they played Villarreal on Sunday.

Deportivo La Coruna moved to fifth in their fight for Champions League football next season, courtesy of a 2-1 home win over bottom side Xerez.

Xerez are in deep trouble, sitting 10 points below the safety zone.



GERMANY

Bayern Munich's 13 match winning run in all competitions came to an end on the

weekend against Nurnberg, but they still cling to pole position on the Bundesliga table.

Munich took the lead through Thomas Muller and the stage was set for a 14th consecutive victory, but Ilkay Gundogan levelled the scores.

Despite continuing a hot, unbeaten streak, Munich's stalemate handed the advantage to second-placed Bayer Leverkusen, who travelled to Werder Bremen on Sunday, to open up a two-point gap between themselves and Munich at the top.

Elsewhere, Borussia Dortmund put a three game losing streak behind them, crushing Hannover 4-1, while Stuttgart striker Cacau scored four goals to guide his side to a 5-1 win over Cologne.

Goalless draws were all Hamburg and Eintracht Frankfurt and Bochum and Mainz could muster in their respective clashes.



SCOTLAND

Rangers are still looking the goods for the Scottish Premier League title, despite Celtic knocking three points from their lead at the top of the table with a 1-0 win against Dundee United.

Rangers now leads by a commanding seven points, less than the formidable 10 before Celtic closed the gap but still a challenging lead to reduce.

Robbie Keane scored his first goal at Celtic Park for the Hoops - and his third goal in five appearances - on 20 minutes and the score remained static as the Bhoys failed to take advantage of numerous chances.

of fellow EPL side Sunderland has the club dreaming of a repeat of 2008, when it won the FA Cup under current Tottenham Hotspur manager Harry Redknapp.

Standing in its way of a semi-final place is Alex McLeish's Birmingham City. The Midlands' team, belying all pre-season predictions by currently jostling for a European qualification place in the EPL, has brushed aside Everton, Derby and Championship high-flyers Nottingham Forest to reach the quarter-finals.

Another club transferring its impressive EPL performance into the cup is Fulham, which face either Tottenham Hotspur or Bolton Wanderers, at the fortress Craven Cottage. Fulham sit in the top-half of the EPL and has a 2-1 lead in the Europa League last 32 against current holders Shakhtar Donetsk.

Tottenham play Bolton at White Hart Lane after a 1-1 draw forced a round five replay. Harry Redknapp's team also needed a replay in round four to see off Manchester United's conquerors Leeds United. A Jermaine Defoe hat-trick, in

EPL															
	Home					Away									
	P	W	D	L	F	P	W	D	L	F	A	G	D	P	T
1 Chelsea	27	12	4	0	38	8	7	3	4	24	14	41	61		
2 Man Utd	27	11	1	1	36	8	7	2	5	27	16	39	57		
3 Arsenal	27	11	1	2	38	14	6	3	4	25	16	33	55		
4 Man City	25	9	3	0	30	14	3	6	4	18	19	15	45		
5 Liverpool	26	9	2	2	31	11	4	3	6	12	16	16	44		
6 Tottenham	26	8	2	3	28	8	4	5	4	17	18	19	43		
7 Aston Villa	25	6	5	2	18	8	5	4	3	14	11	13	42		
8 Everton	26	7	5	2	23	17	3	3	6	15	20	1	38		
9 Birmingham	25	6	5	2	12	8	4	2	6	12	18	-2	37		
10 Fulham	26	8	2	3	19	8	1	5	7	11	20	2	34		
11 Stoke	26	6	4	3	19	14	2	6	5	7	15	-3	34		
12 Blackburn	26	7	4	2	18	12	1	3	9	8	31	-17	31		
13 West Ham	26	5	4	4	23	20	1	5	7	12	20	-5	27		
14 Sunderland	26	5	5	2	19	14	1	3	10	13	30	-12	26		
15 Wigan	25	3	5	4	11	15	3	2	8	15	34	-23	25		
16 Wolves	26	4	3	7	10	19	2	3	7	11	25	-23	24		
17 Hull	27	5	5	3	18	20	0	4	10	7	34	-29	24		
18 Bolton	25	3	5	5	17	23	2	3	7	12	23	-17	23		
19 Burnley	25	6	4	2	17	12	0	1	12	8	38	-25	23		
20 Portsmouth	26	3	2	8	16	20	1	2	10	5	24	-23	16		

Arsenal 2-0 Sunderland
Everton 3-1 Man Utd
Portsmouth 1-2 Stoke
West Ham 3-0 Hull
Wolves 0-2 Chelsea

SPL															
	Home					Away									
	P	W	D	L	F	P	W	D	L	F	A	G	D	P	T
1 Rangers	25	10	3	0	39	8	7	4	1	19	7	43	58		
2 Celtic	26	8	4	1	25	9	7	2	4	26	19	23	51		
3 Hibernian	26	8	3	2	24	12	4	4	5	14	18	8	43		
4 Dundee Utd	26	5	3	4	14	15	6	2	23	20	2	20	42		
5 Motherwell	26	6	4	3	17	14	3	7	3	15	16	2	38		
6 Hearts	25	6	3	3	12	11	2	4	7	11	16	-6	31		
7 Aberdeen	25	4	3	6	12	19	3	5	4	12	13	-8	29		
8 St Johnstone	23	4	3	4	19	17	3	3	5	18	25	-5	27		
9 Kilmarnock	26	4	5	5	19	21	2	7	7	9	13	-12	26		
10 St Mirren	25	3	6	4	12	16	2	1	9	12	20	-12	22		
11 Hamilton	24	2	4	6	7	13	3	2	7	11	22	-17	21		
12 Falkirk	25	2	4	6	12	19	2	4	7	10	21	-18	20		

Celtic 1-0 Dundee Utd
Falkirk 3-1 Aberdeen
Kilmarnock 1-1 St Mirren
Motherwell 1-0 Hibernian

BUNDESLIGA															
	Home					Away									
	P	W	D	L	F	P	W	D	L	F	A	G	D	P	T
1 B Munich	23	8	4	0	25	9	6	3	2	24	11	29	49		
2 Leverkusen	22	9	2	0	28	8	4	7	0	20	10	30	48		
3 Schalke 04	22	8	2	2	21	8	5	4	1	12	7	18	45		
4 Hamburg	23	6	4	2	18	9	4	6	1	25	10	18	40		
5 Dortmund	23	7	2	3	19	11	4	4	3	16	19	5	39		
6 Frankfurt	23	5	4	3	16	15	4	4	3	14	15	0	35		
7 W Bremen	22	4	3	3	17	12	5	4	3	27	14	18	34		
8 Mainz	23	7	4	0	16	7	1	4	7	10	23	-4	32		
9 VfB Stuttgart	23	4	4	4	18	16	4	3	4	14	14	2	31		
10 Hoffenheim	23	4	4	3	16	13	4	1	7	13	16	3	29		
11 B M'glad	23	6	2	3	19	15	2	3	7	14	23	-5	29		
12 VfL Boch	23	2	5	4	15	22	4	3	5	10	16	-13	26		
13 Wolfsburg	23	3	2	6	23	27	3	5	3	15	17	-6	25		
14 Cologne	23	2	3	7	12	22	4	4	3	9	10	-9	25		
15 Freiburg	22	1	3	6	5	18	4	1	7	16	23	-20	19		
16 Hannover	23	2	4	6	14	24	2	1	8	11	21	-20	17		
17 Nuremberg	23	2	3	6	10	16	2	2	8	9	24	-21	17		
18 Hertha	22	1	5	5	8	17	1	1	9	10	25	-24	12		

Cologne 1-5 VfB Stuttgart
Hamburg 0-0 Eintracht Frankfurt
Mainz 0-0 VfL Bochum
Nuremberg 1-1 Bayern Munich
TSV Hoffenheim 2-2 Borussia M'gladbach
Borussia Dortmund 4-1 Hannover 96

FA CUP PREVIEW

By John Dickson

AS the English FA Cup reaches the quarter-finals stage, Goal! Weekly takes a look back through the magic moments this season's illustrious tournament has produced.

Despite the FA Cup currently sliding down the pecking-order of England's bigger clubs it has, once again, sprinkled its magic and re-affirmed the fact that it has lost none of its charm.

Leeds United's slaying of the FA Cup's most successful ever team Manchester United, 1-0 at Old Trafford, provided a moment of football history only the FA Cup can inspire.

It was the first time United boss, Alex Ferguson, had lost in the competition's third round or lost an FA Cup tie to a lower-league club.

Against their fiercest rivals and backed by 9,000 thousand travelling fans Leeds United's highly sought after striker Jer-

maine Beckford delivered the crucial goal for Simon Grayson's side.

The Red Devils wasn't the only big name round three casualty though.

Liverpool was stunned by a 2-1 defeat against Championship club Reading in a replay at Anfield, following a 1-1 draw at the Madejski Stadium.

A last-gasp, 90-th minute penalty from Reading midfielder Gylfi Sigurdsson sent the tie into extra-time before Shane Long shocked the Anfield faithful with the Royal's winning goal, compounding Liverpool's, and Rafa Benitez's, misery.

The poor form of the English Premier League's top clubs continued in the fourth round, when Arsenal travelled to the Britannia Stadium to take on Stoke City.

Two goals from powerhouse forward Ricardo Fuller helped the Potters to a 3-1 scalp in Sol Campbell's first game back at Arsenal after Arsene Wenger re-signed the 35-year-old centre-back.

Chelsea however, contradictory to the performances of its fellow EPL contenders, has convincingly powered through

to the quarter-finals - blasting an impressive 11 goals in three games.

Carlo Ancelotti's team has yet to face EPL opposition, but has made light work of Championship opposition, thrashing Watford and Cardiff 5-0 and 4-1, respectively.

The Blues are guaranteed a sterner test in the quarter-finals, as it plans to retain the FA Cup, with either Manchester City or Stoke City set to visit Stamford Bridge.

Portsmouth, the cash-strapped club currently propping-up the EPL table, has pushed aside its poor form in the league and welcome EPL high-flyers Birmingham City in the only Quarter-Final tie not waiting on a replay.

The F.A. Cup has provided Pompey fans a welcome distraction from the woe of its EPL form and financial fiasco, with reported debts of around 120million Dollars and a notorious history of players' wages not being paid on time.

However, a superb 4-1 victory away to South-Coast rivals Southampton in the previous round, added to a 2-1 defeat

of fellow EPL side Sunderland has the club dreaming of a repeat of 2008, when it won the FA Cup under current Tottenham Hotspur manager Harry Redknapp.

Standing in its way of a semi-final place is Alex McLeish's Birmingham City. The Midlands' team, belying all pre-season predictions by currently jostling for a European qualification place in the EPL, has brushed aside Everton, Derby and Championship high-flyers Nottingham Forest to reach the quarter-finals.

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Tottenham play Bolton at White Hart Lane after a 1-1 draw forced a round five replay. Harry Redknapp's team also needed a replay in round four to see off Manchester United's conquerors Leeds United. A Jermaine Defoe hat-tr



LONDON CALLING



With Leroy Robinson & Adam North



A FAB DECISION?

By Leroy Robinson

A frosty winter in London will soon turn to a warmer (hopefully) spring. In seasonal harmony this article was to match the impending warmth. Alas, due to the actions of one man this is not possible.

Stupid Mistakes

John Terry made a few stupid mistakes. Not off the field, I'm referring to his errors in the performance against Everton when Chelsea lost 2-1 the other week. Yet it is not JT who's ruined what was going to be a warm fuzzy column. For the culprit look no further than Fabio Capello. After stripping JT of the England captaincy he had this to say afterward:

"As a captain with the team, John Terry has displayed extremely positive behaviour. However, I have to take into account other considerations and what is best for all of the England squad... What is best for all of the England team has inspired my choice."

The insinuation is clear; too many negative headlines off the field. But was it the right decision? Before answering I put forth a disclaimer; I am not a fan of John Terry's antics for Chelsea in confronting referees or some of his off-field activities which are too numerous to mention here. (Google John Terry 9 11 incident for more info.)

If you picked up a newspaper over here you'd think Terry was a fugitive who fled to Dubai to escape prosecution rather than to repair his marriage - something which he seems to have been successful at. The consensus among the British press errs on the side of the Italian's so-called moral stance against his liaisons

with Vanessa Five-Minutes-Of-Fame.

Whilst this column deplores Terry's attempts to hush up the affair by employing highly-paid lawyers to fight his corner, under our swingeing privacy laws that is his right. Of course Capello is free to sack JT and give the captaincy to Britney Spears if he desires and until he tells us what the "other considerations" were I have to assume, given the timing, it is based on a moral platform.

Don't get me wrong Terry isn't beyond criticism. His behaviour in allegedly selling private tours of Chelsea's training ground facilities at £10,000 a pop is more than just extortionate as was the allegation he was prepared - through a third party - to rent his executive box at Wembley for the upcoming friendly against Egypt for a mere £4,000. However, the Chelsea matter came up months ago and the latter allegation came after JT was summoned like a Caporegime to see his Underboss.

The chat was short, its outcome a delight to the moralists. It doesn't take away my assertion that Terry is still the best man for the job despite his transgression from accepted ethical normality. If Capello's wish was to have a distraction-free build-up to the World Cup then it has probably worked yet it is an absurd affront to their professionalism to think that the team would lose focus on their goals if JT remained captain.

Will It Affect England's WC Chances?

No. Even if Ashley Cole is injured Wayne Bridge and John Terry are professional enough to put their egos aside. The only thing they'll do together is train and play, unless Capello is imprudent enough to make them room together in the hotel.

Had Capello kept JT as captain I



John Terry can't wait to get his kit off after the final whistle has blown.

have no doubt by the time of the World Cup the initial controversy would have blown over for other stories like Tiger Woods's comeback from sex addiction or some other salacious story. Let's remember Rio Ferdinand isn't a choirboy, as recent revelations in the press have shown. What happens if there are a few too many stories about Rio for Capello's liking? Cue the song 'Another one bites the dust'.

Let's also not forget that Rio isn't really a vocal leader and hasn't shown this tendency at any time throughout his career. JT is England's leader and my gut tells me he will be just as vocal out on the pitch as he always is. In essence JT will be the unofficial captain with Rio's armband being more a status symbol and a ticket to get first dibs at press conferences in South Africa.

Therefore I don't think it has helped or hindered England's chances come the summer. Due to this some would say

Capello has done the right thing though time will tell. One thing is certain; come the summer the whole nation will be behind the team regardless of who wears the armband.

Will it affect Chelsea?

Carlo Ancelotti put it perfectly:

"If the private life of one player doesn't involve or impinge upon his professional life, I don't have a problem... If John comes to the training ground but is not able to train because he's tired or nervous, I can be interested then."

His private life is private, as long as it doesn't affect his ability to do his job. Chelsea won't suffer for Terry's indiscretions.

What's All the Fuss Really About?

"On the field John Terry is a fantastic player and a good England captain... but to be the captain of England you

have got to have wider responsibilities for the country. If these allegations are proven it does call into question his role as England captain."

That's not a quote from the clergy; it's from UK Sports Minister Gerry Sutcliffe. One assumes that these "wider responsibilities" include carrying a higher moral burden. Codswallop. We have a twisted notion in England that the captain represents some superior honourable platform to be paraded on his pedestal with pride. In essence this issue is more about people being fed-up with footballers who in their eyes make too much money and spend it too lavishly. By putting Terry in his place it gives those haters a smug sense of well-being. For the sake of balance it is also about the hypocrisy of a celebrity content to take the good publicity and shield the bad with their bankroll.

John Terry Role Model?

This leads to another point hammered home in the press; that somehow JT has disturbed the fragile equilibrium of millions of football-loving kids who view him as a role model. The argument presumes JT's actions have sent the following message to our impressionable younglings: *it's ok to commit adultery because the England captain did.*

Nonsense. Yes, footballers ARE role models though only in the true sense of the definition. The definition being "a person whose behaviour in a particular role is imitated by others".

Footballers are role models to kids only as athletes and not as husbands, boyfriends or fathers. Those latter role models are supposed to be within the home. Making JT responsible for anything other than his professional conduct abdicates those closer to home of any accountability. Perhaps Capello should have made Rio take a public vow of fidelity. It's too late now so here's my advice to the next England captain; tell people you're a Mormon and get yourself as many 'wives' as you want.

Is this really the Champions League?

By Adam North

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to propose an idea. Let's put all the league winners from the top divisions around Europe into one big new competition, not unlike the World Cup in format. Let's see who the best club team in Europe really is. We'll call it the Champions League. But hold on, you want to add up to four teams from one country? Wait, and now you want to give the seventh placed team in a league a chance to qualify as well?

In case the above confused you a little, let me give a little background to a decision which could be made in England concerning UEFA Champions League qualifying. The Champions League, or as it was formally the European Cup, is a competition which is supposed to pit the best teams in Europe against one another to see which team, and even which league, can be considered Europe's best.

However in the last decade the competition has been somewhat watered down to include, as is the case in England, up to four teams from one league. The Champions League is certainly a misnomer, as often it is not any sort of champion which eventually wins the thing. And during the week in which the knockout

stage of this year's competition starts up, there is a proposal that has been put forward by some Premier League officials, with support from several managers and teams, to further dilute the competition.

What is being proposed is that the top three teams in the English League will qualify as usual, but the fourth placed team will have to enter a playoff along with the fifth, sixth and seventh placed teams in the league in a knockout style playoff to decide who takes the fourth and final Champions League place.

The argument for the playoffs is that for too long the so called "top four" have had the Champions League places to themselves, with smaller clubs being frozen out. But hold on, Tottenham were a game away from finishing fourth ahead of North London rivals Arsenal in 2006, until they seemingly lost their nerve, as well as their lunch (if you remember), on the final day of the season. And in 2005 Everton actually finished in the top four, ahead of their local rivals Liverpool. And what did Everton do with their place; they lost in the qualifying rounds of the competition, and the next season they finished nearer the relegation places than the top four.

And it's almost ironic that it's this season that the proposal for playoffs is announced as we have the tightest ever scrap for the fourth Premier League spot.



Jose Morinho can't wait for the preliminaries to finish, so he can get his troops down to the serious business.

Manchester City, Tottenham, Aston Villa, and maybe even Everton all have a chance of unseating Liverpool from the Champions League and so to suggest that "smaller" teams don't have a chance of finishing fourth is simply untrue. As with most things in sport the teams outside the top four have to earn a place among the elite competitors; they cannot be simply given a handout.

There is often discussion of deservedness in relation of football. One team deserved to win over another, this player deserves to get a start for his country, this team deserves to get relegated. The problem, or to put it correctly the attraction of football, and indeed of all sport, is that it is unplanned and unpredictable, meaning teams, players and fans do not

always get what they rightly deserved. So surely if it's possible to create a situation where teams can actually achieve something they deserve, which qualifying for the Champions League certainly represents, then surely it must be enforced. To finish in the top four means that you have earned the right to play in the top club competition in Europe, and you shouldn't have to replay a team that you could have finished twenty or so points ahead of.

And if we are just trying to add excitement to our league, then why not have a playoff for the title, which is what happens in English Rugby League's Super League. We could have the top eight teams each year enter into a knockout against each other to see claims the prize

of Premier League Champions. And maybe a playoff decider between the bottom six to see who goes down. And a playoff between the winners of the League Cup and the FA cup to see who the Cup Kings of England are. And so on, and so on, and so on.

The main problem I see with the Champions League isn't that too few teams have a chance at qualifying for it, but that too many do. The premier European club competition should be for the very best teams in Europe, not teams which often finish over fifteen points behind their respective league champions. In the case of the Premiership, at least in my opinion, only the top two teams should qualify, leaving the others to fight for the qualification into the lesser European competitions. Surely having a competition full of league winners and runners up would make the Champions League better than by having a team placed seventh in a league involved.

This proposal from the Premier League is almost farcical, much like their proposal of a thirty ninth league game last year. Football is the biggest sport in the world, bar none, and the English Premier League is the most watched league in the world. Why the people in power seem to want to mess around with things that are perfectly fine is simply beyond comprehension. And for me, having an existing possibility in which a seventh placed team can enter the premier European club competition is a lose-lose situation. If they lose early, then it proves that they shouldn't be in the cup, but if they win, surely it devalues what is known as the "Champions" League. That's if it hasn't been too devalued already.

MATCH A - 1ST LEG



MELB
VICTORY
2 - 1



SYDNEY
FC

By Roy Hay

ON a pitch which looked like the Sahara desert prior to the Dakar rally, Melbourne Victory took on Sydney FC in its season defining home leg of the Major Semi-final of the 2009-10 A-League and came out on top by two goals to one.

Three nights of AC/DC had resulted in great stripes of grassless sand across the Coventry-end goalmouth. Once again the Etihad stadium management got their retaliation in first with a pre-emptive statement that the pitch was safe and playable and only presented cosmetic problems. But the players after the game remarked that it required at least one extra touch to bring the ball under control and footing was very difficult.

Victory skipper Kevin Muscat returned and Surat Sukha started in defence, while stopper Rodrigo Vargas turned out with more strapping than Serena Williams. Sydney was missing its skipper Steve Corica, whose career ended early during last week's final round victory over Melbourne, which gave his team the Premier's Plate.

After an opening flurry by Sydney, Victory got its game going with some slick interpassing, but Victory's opener was a classic Route One effort.

A long ball from Muscat found Nik Mrdja hemmed in by Simon Colosimo and Stefan Keller, but Colosimo headed the ball sideways and Mrdja latched on to it and drove it past Clint Bolton. It was Victory's first goal against Sydney this season and Mrdja's first goals for his temporary club.

That came in the 14th minute.

The second was a delightfully sharp move, started by Muscat once again who found Nick Ward in the centre of the Sydney half and he weighted a pass through the defence to Carlos Hernandez.

The Costa Rican showed cool control and placed the ball past the onrushing Bolton in the 40th minute.

Two-nil is never a comfortable lead and two minutes later when Victory was stretched down the left, veteran John Aloisi collected the ball and sent a straightforward shot towards goal. In trying to block it Muscat only succeeded in causing it to loop up and over Langerack who had the initial shot covered.

That took the steam out of Victory for a while and Sydney dominated the early stages of the second half, in which Adrian Leijer was quickly booked for a foul on Alex Brosque.

Shoot-out loss ends United's finals dream

GOLD Coast United's Grand Final dream has come to a disappointing and premature end after Miron Bleiberg's men suffered a dramatic 6-5 penalty shoot-out defeat to the Newcastle Jets at Skilled Park.

Both sides converted their regulation five spot kicks before Jets goalkeeper Ben Kennedy became the hero for the visitors, brilliantly saving Zenon Caravalla's penalty to send his side through to the next phase of

MRDJA ROCKS, THEN ROLLS...



Carlos Hernandez keeps Victory's dream alive.
PHOTO: ANITA MILAS

Hernandez hit a spectacular and speculative volley from wide on the right, which hit the junction of the cross-bar and post with Bolton scrambling to try to reach it.

In 54 minutes he had another effort after a one-two with Tom Pondeljak but if we had been in Scotland I would have said he scuffed it, but for Australian readers it was a mishit.

The game became even more toothy and Stuart Musialik was booked for a bad challenge on Adrian Leijer, but a couple of minutes later came an incident which sent the home team and its supporters into apoplexy.

Nick Mrdja was sent off for an elbow on Shannon Cole on the say-so of the assistant referee on the Victory side of the field, Hakan Anaz.

A few moments later Brendan Gan brought down Muscat from behind in what looked a straight red card offence, but he got off with a yellow.

Victory had to regroup with Nick Ward replaced by Marvin Angulo. Sydney seemed content to play for the second leg and looked much less threatening against 10 men than they did against 11, though coach Vitislav Lavicka said, 'We put on two fresh men'. Victory held on for the win, which Ernie Merrick thought was well deserved, particularly on the first half performance.

When Muscat was asked whether he saw the Gan tackle as a sending off, he told the media, "I didn't see it", which brought the house down. Neither Lavicka nor John Aloisi was prepared to concede the tie as yet, though they thought the return leg would be very tough.

Victory may have to find another permutation up front, with Archie Thompson unlikely to be fit in time.

the Finals Series.

United had a chance to win it after Jin-Hyung Song blazed his sudden death spot-kick high over the bar, but Kristian Rees did the same for Gold Coast to keep the Jets alive in the shoot-out.

The result brings down the curtain on Gold Coast's inaugural season, their rollercoaster campaign suffering a fatal blow mainly due to an outstanding performance from Kennedy, who made a string of breathtaking saves to deny United time and time again during the regulation 90 minutes and the half hour of extra time.



Nick Mrdja gets his marching orders. PHOTO: DANIEL FLIS



The pitch looked like it was nursing a hangover and needed a BeroCCA after the AC/DC concert. PHOTO: ROY HAY



John Aloisi scoops the important away goal. PHOTO: DANIEL FLIS

PHOENIX MARCH ON

WELLINGTON Phoenix FC's historic ride into the Hyundai A-League final series has continued, the home team beating Perth Glory on penalties in a nail-biting elimination semifinal at Westpac Stadium.

With a New Zealand record 24,278 fans roaring them on, the Phoenix ran themselves into the ground through two gruelling periods of extra time after the match finished 1-1 in regular time.

Down to 10 men after Jon McKain was marched for a second yellow card in the first period of extra time, the Phoenix held out the fast-finishing Glory to force

the match to penalties.

Phoenix stopper Liam Reddy was the hero for the home side, pulling off two stunning penalty saves while his teammates all converted from the spot to give the Phoenix a 4-2 win.

Phoenix head coach Ricki Herbert was thrilled with the result, which means the Wellington outfit will now take on the Newcastle Jets at Westpac Stadium in two weeks' time to continue their ambitions to reach the grand final.

"We're through and we have another shot, so that's great. It was always going to be a tough, tight game and both teams had periods where they dominated and were under a bit of pressure. But that's finals football. We needed to get a result and we did."



HYUNDAI
A-LEAGUE

RESULTS

Melbourne Victory 2 (Nik MRDJA 16', Carlos HERNANDEZ 40')
Sydney FC 1 (John ALOISI 42')
Thursday, 18 February 2010
Etihad Stadium, Melbourne
Referee: Peter Green
Assistant referees: Ben Wilson and Hakan Anaz
Fourth official: Kevin Docherty
Crowd: 18,453

Melbourne Victory line-up: 1. Mitchell LANGERACK (gk), 2. Kevin MUSCAT (c), 5. Surat SUKHA (19), Evan BERGER 60', 6. Leigh BROXHAM, 8. Grant BRENNER, 12. Rodrigo VARGAS, 15. Tom PONDELJAK (17. Matthew FOSCHINI 90'), 16. Carlos HERNANDEZ, 22. Nick WARD (11. Marvin ANGULO 84'), 23. Adrian LEIJER, 29. Nik MRDJA

Yellow cards: Adrian LEIJER 46', Kevin MUSCAT 85'
Red cards: Nik MRDJA 74'

Sydney FC line-up: 1. Clint BOLTON (gk), 3. Stephan KELLER, 4. Simon COLOSIMO, 6. Karol KISEL, 7. Brendan GAN (16. Chris PAYNE 79'), 8. Stuart MUSIALIK, 9. John ALOISI (c), 12. Shannon COLE, 14. Alex BROSCUE, 15. Terry MCFLYNN (23. Iain RAMSAY 90'), 22. Sung-Hwan BYUN

Yellow cards: Simon COLOSIMO 26', Alex BROSCUE 37', Stuart MUSIALIK 61', Brendan GAN 76'
Red cards: Nil

Gold Coast United 0
Newcastle Jets 0
(Newcastle Jets win 6-5 on penalties)
Saturday, 20 February 2010
Skilled Park, Robina
Referee: Matthew Breeze
Assistant Referees: Brad Hobson & Nathan Macdonald
Fourth official: Jarrod Gillett
Crowd: 4,109

Gold Coast United line-up: 1. Jesse VANSTRATTAN (gk), 3. Michael THWAITE, 5. ROBSON (18. James BROWN 85'), 7. Zenon CARAVALLA, 8. ANDERSON, 9. Shane SMELTZ, 10. Jason CULINA (c), 11. Charlie MILLER (36. Dino DJULBIC 57'), 13. Bas VAN DEN BRINK, 14. Joel PORTER (17. Matt OSMAN 114'), 16. Kristian REES

Yellow cards: Robson 27', Michael Thwaite 71'
Red cards: Nil

Newcastle Jets line-up: 1. Ben KENNEDY (gk), 3. Adam D'APUZZO, 4. Nikolai TOPOR-STANLEY, 5. Ljubo MILICEVIC, 7. Jin-Hyung SONG, 8. Matt THOMPSON (c), 11. Tarek ELRICH, 12. Jobe WHEELHOUSE (22. Kaz PATAFTA 81'), 15. Sean ROONEY (9. Saaho PETROVSKI 84'), 26. Labint HALITI (29. Mirjan PAVLOVIC 71'), 26. Ali ABBAS

Yellow cards: Mirjan Pavlovic 91+
Red cards: Nil

Wellington Phoenix 1 (Chris GREENACRE 37')
Perth Glory 1 (Scott NEVILLE 67')
(Wellington Phoenix wins 4-2 on penalties)
Sunday 21 February 2010
Westpac Stadium, Wellington
Referee: Strebir Delovski
Assistant referees: Alex Glasgow and Rodney Allen
Fourth official: Chris Beeth
Crowd: 24,278

Wellington Phoenix squad: 2. Manny MUSCAT, 3. Tony LOCHHEAD (15. Eugene DADI 76'), 4. Jon McKAIN, 6. Tim BROWN, 7. Leo BERTOS (14. Adrian CACERES 71'), 8. Paul IFILL, 9. Chris GREENACRE (18. Ben SIGMUND 105'), 13. Troy HEARFIELD, 17. Vince LIA, 22. Andrew DURANTE (c), 40. Liam REDDY (gk)

Yellow cards: Jon McKAIN 32/104', Eugene DADI 118'
Red cards: Jon McKAIN 104'

Perth Glory Squad: 1. Tando VELAPHI (gk), 2. Danny MCBREEN, 3. Jamie COYNE, 4. Andy TODD, 6. Chris COYNE, 7. Jacob BURNS (c) (16. Adriano PELLEGRINO 112'), 10. Wayne SRHOJ (21. Mile STERJOVSKI 55'), 12. Scott NEVILLE, 14. Stevan McGARRY, 17. Todd HOWARTH (13. Scott BULLOCH 66'), 19. Naum SEKULOVSKI

Yellow cards: Wayne SRHOJ 21', Scott NEVILLE 41', Andy TODD 80', Jacob BURNS 72'
Red cards: Nil

NEXT ROUND

Hyundai A-League 2010 Finals Series
- Week 2, March 7

Sydney FC v Melbourne Victory
2nd Leg
Sunday 7 March, 2010
Sydney Football Stadium, Sydney
Kick off 5pm (NSW time)
Gates Open 3pm

Wellington Phoenix v Newcastle Jets
Sunday 7 March, 2010
Westpac Stadium, Wellington
Kick Off 4pm (NZ Time) (2pm AEDT)
Gates Open 3pm

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